

SILK ROAD

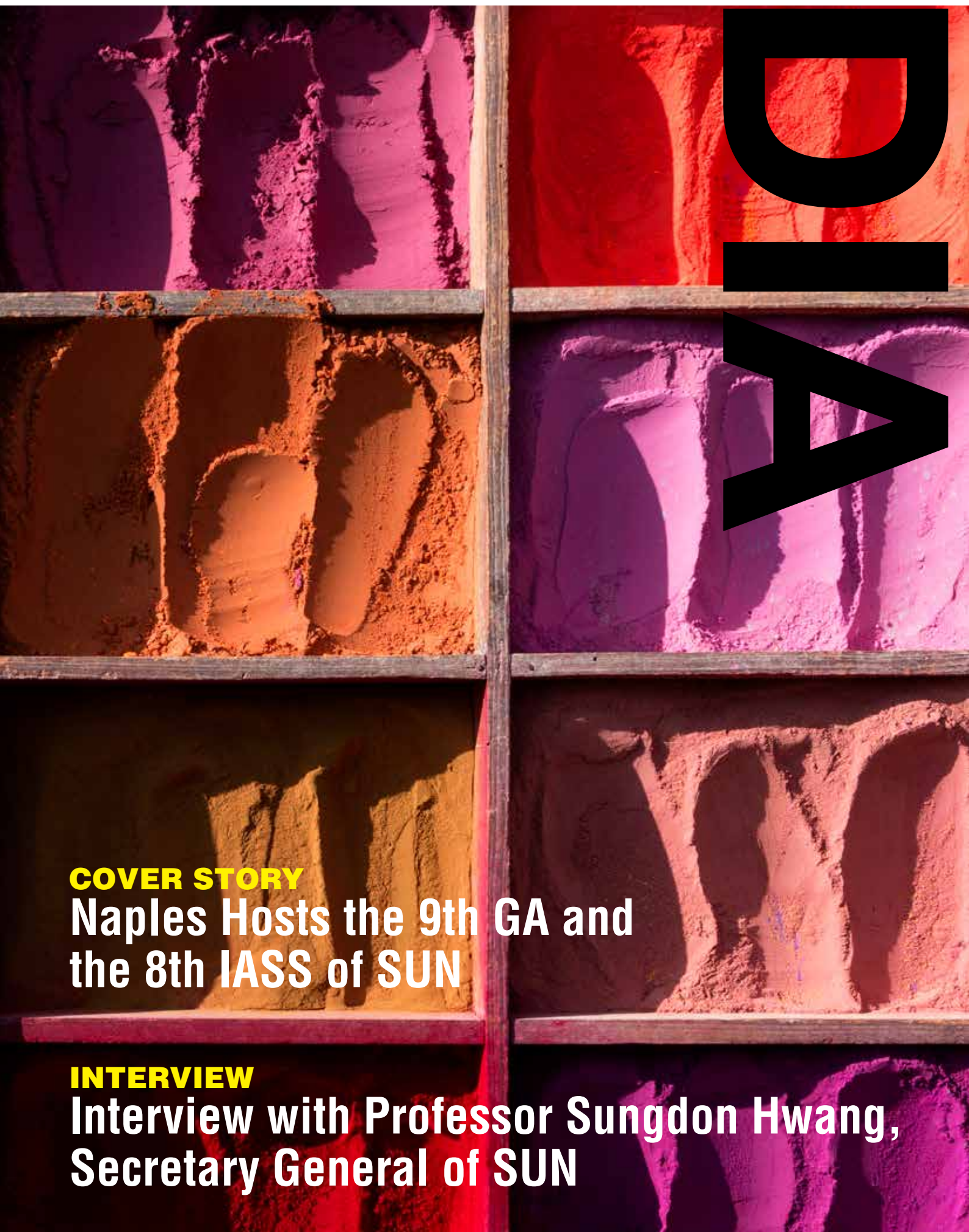
THE SILK-ROAD
UNIVERSITIES NETWORK'S
WEB MAGAZINE

VOL.6 NO.2

DECEMBER 2024



**SILK-ROAD
UNIVERSITIES
NETWORK**



COVER STORY

**Naples Hosts the 9th GA and
the 8th IASS of SUN**

INTERVIEW

**Interview with Professor Sungdon Hwang,
Secretary General of SUN**

SILKROADIA

Biannual webzine of the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) -
a non-governmental, non-profit international organization

Publisher

Sungdon Hwang, *Secretary General of SUN*

Editor-in-Chief

Shi-yong Chon

English Editor

Ronald Steiner, *Chapman University, USA*

Assistant English Editor

Sujung Cua, *Chapman University, USA*

Katerina Vlahopoulitis, *Chapman University, USA*

Art Director

Eui-hwan Cho

Editorial Advisory Board

Sharma D.A.P. *Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, University of Delhi, India*

Carmona Carles Padill, *University of Valencia, Spain*

Gökman Ertan, *Ankara University, Turkey*

Hao Wu, *Beijing Foreign Studies University, People's Republic of China*

Jantsan Bat-Ireedui, *National University of Mongolia, Mongolia*

German Kim, *Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Kazakhstan*

Lippiello Tiziana, *Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy*

Melin Harri, *University of Tampere, Finland*

Naimat Salameh, *University of Jordan, Jordan*

Jeong-woon Park, *Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Republic of Korea*

Sen Vo Van, *University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam*

Tangalycheva Rimma, *St. Petersburg State University, Russia*

Tishehyar Mandana, *AllamehTabataba'i University, Iran*

Editorial Assistants

Yu-jeong Lee, *Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Republic of Korea*

Ga-ram Lee, *Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Republic of Korea*

Amalli Ranavi Thanthrige Saumya, *Graduate student at Linkoping University, Sweden*



**SILK-ROAD
UNIVERSITIES
NETWORK**



The Office of SUN Secretariat

Samarkand International University of Technology, 270 Spitamen Ave.

Samarkand 140100, Uzbekistan

Tel. +82-2-2173-3581 / Fax. +82-2-2173-3582

www.sun-silkroadia.org

Request for publication of articles and related issues
should be addressed to sunwebzine@sun0822.org

Copyright © All rights reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced without prior written permission from authors / SUN

Cover Photo by Eui-hwan Cho_ Kathmandu, Nepal

CONTENTS

04	Letter from the Editor
	Cover Story
09	Naples Hosts the 9th GA & the 8th IASS <i>-Amali Ranavi Thanthrige</i>
17	Interview with Professor Sungdon Hwang,Secretary General of SUN <i>-Amali Ranavi Thanthrige</i>
32	Student’s Plaza <i>-Maria Pourlioti</i> <i>-Manfei Zhu</i>
44	Highlights of the 9th SUN General Assembly and the 8th IASS Conference in Naples, Italy - <i>Min-ju Sung & Min-song Kim</i>
	Filmmakers On The Silk Roads
69	Cristian Mungiu: Romania’s Voice of Our Shared Human Struggle <i>-Cameron Shirvani Steiner</i>
	2023-2024 WRICOS Winners
91	Winner in Poem - <i>Ilma Ahmad</i> Winner in Essay - <i>Byambasuren Erdenebayar</i>
	Travel
101	Cinque Terre - Jewel of the Italian Riviera - <i>Laura Di Cuffa</i>
	Heritage
112	Ao Dai – Vietnam’s Traditional Attire: Legacy of Silk Roads Trade <i>- Dr. Lê Thị Ngọc Diệp & Dr. Trần Cao Bội Ngọc</i>
125	Doina, Breath of Romania - <i>Hyeong-hoo Kim</i>
132	Gawai Dayak Festival in Malaysia: A Celebration of Identity and Cultural Preservation - <i>Patricia Nora Riget & Gregory Kiyai</i>
142	SUN News
149	USSUN News
169	News from Member Universities

Disclaimer
The Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) Secretariat is not responsible for accuracy, completeness or suitability for any purpose of the content published. Opinions and views expressed in this webzine are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by the SUN Secretariat. SUN Secretariat shall not be held accountable for any liabilities and disputes arising out of the use of the content published.



Shi-yong Chon

SUN Looks to a New Decade

Ninth GA in Naples Sets a New Course for Future Action

The Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) returned to Italy for its annual General Assembly (GA) and the International Academic Conference of the International Association for Silk-Road Studies (IASS). The University of Naples L'Orientale graciously hosted the Ninth General Assembly and the Eighth IASS Conference in November 2024.

Seven years earlier, Ca'Foscari University of Venice hosted the Third GA in 2018. Both Venice and Naples were significant locations on the ancient Silk Roads, making it especially meaningful for the

SUN community to gather once more in Italy as it embarks on a new decade of growth and collaboration. Since its inception in 2015 in Seoul, South Korea, SUN has achieved remarkable growth and expansion over the past decade.

Under the theme of “Strengthening the Network Power of SUN for Fostering International Cooperation and Collaboration among Member Universities,” participating heads, professors, and students from member universities worked together over five days to reflect on the Network’s development over the past decade and discuss its strategic direction for the years ahead.

Notably, SUN, which now encompasses eighty-one universities and higher educational institutions across sixty-two cities in twenty-seven countries along the ancient Silk Roads, welcomed five new members:

University of Donja Gorica, Montenegro; Mu’tah University, Jordan; University Abou Bekr Belkaid - Tlemcen, Algeria; Setif 1 University Ferhat Abbas, Algeria; and University of Science and Technology Houari Boumediene, Algeria.

The admission of three Algerian uni-

versities particularly demonstrates SUN's successful efforts to expand its presence on the African continent.

The Naples GA also saw key appointments that will strengthen SUN's leadership. Professor Mohammad Galety of Samarkand International University of Technology was named president of IASS 2025. Professor M. Ertan Gökmen of Ankara University was appointed as an auditor for SUN, and Professor Dorota Majewicz of Koszalin University of Technology, Poland, was designated SUN's student advisor. For USSUN, the student arm of SUN, appointed Emanuele Pizzato of Ca'Foscari University of Venice Secretary General of USSUN.

The 2025 programs and projects drawn up during the Naples GA reaffirm SUN's commitment to the values of the ancient Silk Roads: coexistence, collaboration, co-prosperity, diversity, and inclusiveness.

To mark the 700th anniversary of Marco Polo's death, Ca'Foscari University of Venice will host four student contests in collaboration with SUN. Ca'Foscari had previously partnered with SUN and the city of Venice in 2021 for events

commemorating the Italian ancient city's 1600th anniversary, which sets high expectations for the upcoming Marco Polo events.

SUN has also established plans for a series of ambitious "Silk-Road Forums" to be hosted across multiple member universities:

**Silk-Road Museum, History,
and Archaeology Forum**

*University of Naples "L'Orientale" and
Professor Emeritus Richard T. Griffith,
Leiden University*

**Silk-Road Language and
Literature Forum**

*Uzbekistan State University of World
Languages*

**Silk-Road Nature Conservation
and Climate Forum**

*University of Delhi and National University of
Mongolia*

**Silk-Road Inter-Disciplinary
Research Forum**

Canadian University of Dubai

Silk-Road Medical Forum

*UNICA and National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens*

Silk-Road Sports Forum

University of Donja Gorica, Montenegro

A successful launch of these forums will undoubtedly make 2025 — a milestone 10th anniversary for SUN—one of the network’s most vibrant and productive years yet. Every member of the SUN community is encouraged to contribute to making these initiatives a resounding success, laying a strong foundation for another decade of impactful collaboration and growth.



Naples Hosts the 9th GA & the 8th IASS of SUN



Amali Ranavi Thantrige



Marking the 9th consecutive year, Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) held its 9th General Assembly in Naples, Italy from 11 to 15 November, 2024. The annual gathering of SUN was co-sponsored by University of Naples L'Orientale, Italy, and the Canadian University of Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and was held simultaneously with the 8th International Academic Conference of SUN. This year's event had participation from about 24 different member universities located along the Silk Roads, and university heads, professors, academic staff, and students gathered to strengthen partnerships and collaborations.

University of Naples L'Orientale, as a pi-

oneer member of SUN, took the opportunity to bring diverse cultures, skills, teachers, and scholars into one place through co-hosting the annual General Assembly and the IASS academic conference in one of the cultural hubs of Italy. Since the occasion was organized under the theme of “strengthening partnerships for research among member universities” holding two significant events simultaneously allowed all important academic figures to exchange knowledge while engaging in insightful dialogues on developing further collaborative initiatives.

Not only were there the heads of member universities and students, but other



key figures represented the city of Naples, as well as non-member universities, and other distinguished guests shed lights on building strong and effective research and academic collaborations. The participation of Francesco Senese, Advisor to the Mayor of Naples on International Affairs, Wu Junru, Co-Director of the Instituto Confucio, and representatives from University of Tokyo signaled potential ways of restoring and reforming existing membership among Asian universities.

The event continued following the usual order with the opening ceremony, administrative procedures, and award ceremony where the students of SUN receive the recognition for their excellence contribution and performances through Writing Contest of SUN (WRICOS) and Photo Contest of SUN (PHOCOS). Through these awards SUN attempts to open doors for the students of SUN to explore hidden talents while sharing the beauty of diversity along the Silk Roads.

During the four day event, participants also had opportunities to discover the unique artistic and architectural value of



the city of Naples and its region through cultural tours. On the third day, university heads and representatives had the opportunity to visit the Eboli, a historically important location that is also known as the birthplace of the founder of the University of Naples L'Orientale, Matteo Ripa. Meanwhile, the student participants enjoyed the traditional and modern beauty of Naples. One of the most important things for keeping the spirit of SUN alive is maintaining strong and meaningful relationships with each and every member university. Dr. Sung Dong Hwang, the Secretary General of SUN, stressed that these annual gatherings nurtured the essence of the overall mission of SUN and friendships among



member universities.

The last day of the General Assembly was mainly allocated for student workshops and president's workshops where present and future leaders of SUN and the globe engaged in discussions to craft plans for future activities. Shifting the USSUN Secretariat, the principal administrative center for the students, from Allameh Tabataba'i University, Teheran, Iran to Ca'Foscari University of Venice, Italy, was one of the significant moment for SUN as well as USSUN. The newly appointed Secretary General of USSUN, Elia Emanuele Pizzato, and Professor Dorota Majewi, Advisor to USSUN, emphasized building strong networks and maintaining connec-



tions through active communication as essential to carry the students' work of SUN.

At the same time, university presidents joined in conversations about strengthening research collaboration and launching academic exchange programs which will mutually benefit students as well as scholars/researchers. The annual gathering successfully ended on 15 November, confirming Samarkand International University of Technology (SIUT) as the co-host of 10th General Assembly, proving that the SUN and member Universities continue to promote peaceful co-existence of universities, cultures, people, and the countries.

Amali Ranavi Thanthrige is a graduate student in International and European relations at Linköping University, Sweden. She is also an editorial assistant of SILKROADIA.



Interview with Professor Sungdon Hwang, Secretary General of SUN

Amali Ranavi Thanthrige

Professor Sungdon Hwang, Secretary General of SUN, collaborated closely with the University of Naples L'Orientale and the Canadian University Dubai to organize the 9th General Assembly of SUN and the 8th International Academic Conference of the International Association for Silk Road Studies (IASS) in Naples, Italy, this November. As the 9th General Assembly of SUN and the 8th International Academic Conference successfully ended with the participation of heads of member universities, students, new member universities, as well as diverse set of distinguish guests from various institutions, **SILKROADIA** team invited the Secretary General for an interview to share some insights about these events along with his thoughts and plans for the upcoming activities of SUN.

During this interview he stressed how successful it was to hold the two major events of SUN simultaneously, and particularly how a clear-cut division of labor in the preparatory work for both events allowed more effective collaboration between two event planners. Professor

Hwang also mentioned how important was the opportunity to address the need to strengthen research collaborations among member universities. Consequently, as a result of combined effort and discussions, SUN and the member universities have agreed to establish forums to foster these collaborations. For example, **the Silk Road Medical Forum** will be led jointly by UNICA (Network of Universities from the Capitals of European Countries) and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greek, and the **Silk Road Language and Literature Forum** led by Uzbekistan State University of World Languages.

Further, the Secretary General noted that outstanding Algerian Universities have joined as new members of SUN, inaugurating SUN's anticipated partnerships with even more African Universities in the future, with the special support of University of Naples L'Orientale.. Professor Hwang also highlighted that he is excited about new leaderships of the USSUN, the student body of SUN, and looks forward to seeing diverse activities that benefit students while increasing students participa-

tion in SUN events. Lastly, he also noted that the SUN is preparing to join the UN Economic and Social Council this year, signaling an exciting future for the organization. Below are excerpts from the interview.

Q: How do you evaluate the outcomes of the 9th General Assembly of SUN and the 8th International Academic Conference of IASS? What are the key achievements of these events?

A: Quite successful in many respects. First of all, the General Assembly and the IASS conference this year established a good case for collaboration between the host university and the SUN Secretariat for preparing the two events in the future. The two entities agreed on a clear-cut division of labor in preparing the events. The host university was focused upon the IASS conference while the SUN Secretariat Office took the lead on the General Assembly. The collaboration between the two parties based upon this division of labor was so fantastic that the two events were able



Professor Sung Dong Hwang and Professor Patricia during the 9th GA of SUN

Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

to be completed without any conflicts between the two parties and with the complete satisfaction of the participants.

Second, as a result of this year's General Assembly and the IASS conference, SUN can establish a structure for research collaboration among member universities, which is a fundamental reason for establishing SUN. Numerous forums in which researchers of member universities do research together were formed, and the university which is supposed to take the leader in managing each of the four initiatives was decided. For example, the Silk Road Research Collaboration Forum to promote

international, inter-universities, and interdisciplinary research collaboration was established and will be led by the Canadian University Dubai, which is the chair university of SUN. The Silk Road History, Archeology, and Museum Forum was initiated by the University of Naples “L’Orientale” and the will be co-led by Professor Emeritus Richard Griffith of University of Leiden.

Third, the two events in Naples this year enabled SUN to expand its international network. Three universities in Algeria joined SUN and participated in the events so that Africa now can be included in the list of continents where SUN member universities are located. Organizations which have had a strong international network such as UNICA, an alliance of universities at the capital cities of European countries, and ISMEO, a renowned international scientific and cultural organization for Mediterranean and Oriental studies has become a partner of SUN. In addition, a very important initiative by which SUN will establish strong ties with diverse Silk Road cities was provided by the signing during

the General Assembly of an MOU between SUN and with “WeGo,” an international association of more than 250 cities in the world led by the metropolitan city of Seoul, Korea.

Last but not least, the SUN events in Naples this year enabled us to witness the strong willingness of SUN member universities to overcome limitations which had been posed by the pandemic. The number of participating universities and people in the events was restored to levels seen before the pandemic. We also saw no change at all in the readiness for active support for and participation in the activities of SUN by the member universities. The host universities for the forthcoming General Assemblies and IASS annual conferences from 2025 till 2028 were decided without any hesitation.

Q: This year, for the first time, the SUN General Assembly and the IASS International Academic Conference were held simultaneously. Do you believe this approach was effective? What were its benefits?

A: Although it was not “for the first time,” holding the two events simultaneously at the same place, this year at University of Naples “L’Orientale” represented a good approach. It enriched the programs more than holding the two events separately from one another. It also enabled us to hold the two events more cost-effectively. Insofar as the President of IASS does not think otherwise, it seems better for the two events to be held simultaneously at the same place as happened this year.

Q: The theme of this year’s events was “How to Strengthen Research Collaboration among Member Universities.” Could you elaborate on the discussions and outcomes related to this topic?

A: As I mentioned earlier, research collaboration among member universities of SUN is a fundamental mission of SUN. Thanks to a strong commitment from Professor Chelli, Chairman of SUN, this issue was adopted as the overall official theme of the General Assembly of SUN this year. The heads of delegations to the General

Assembly were asked to discuss this issue during the board meeting. All participating board members agreed on the necessity of this activity of SUN and saw eye to eye on the timing. They all agreed to establish a structure enabling research collaboration among member universities especially in the inter-disciplinary and sustainable ways. As a result of intensive discussions, it was decided to establish a number of forums with each being led by a particular university, as follows:

- International Interdisciplinary Research Forum led by the Canadian University Dubai
- Silk Road Medical Forum led jointly by UNICA (Network of Universities from the Capitals of European Countries) and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greek
- Silk Road Museum Forum led jointly by University of Naples “L’Orientale” and Professor Emeritus Robert Griffith, Leiden University, Netherland
- Silk Road History Forum, Silk Road

Archeology Forum, and Silk Road
Anthropology Forum led by
University of Naples “L’Orientale”

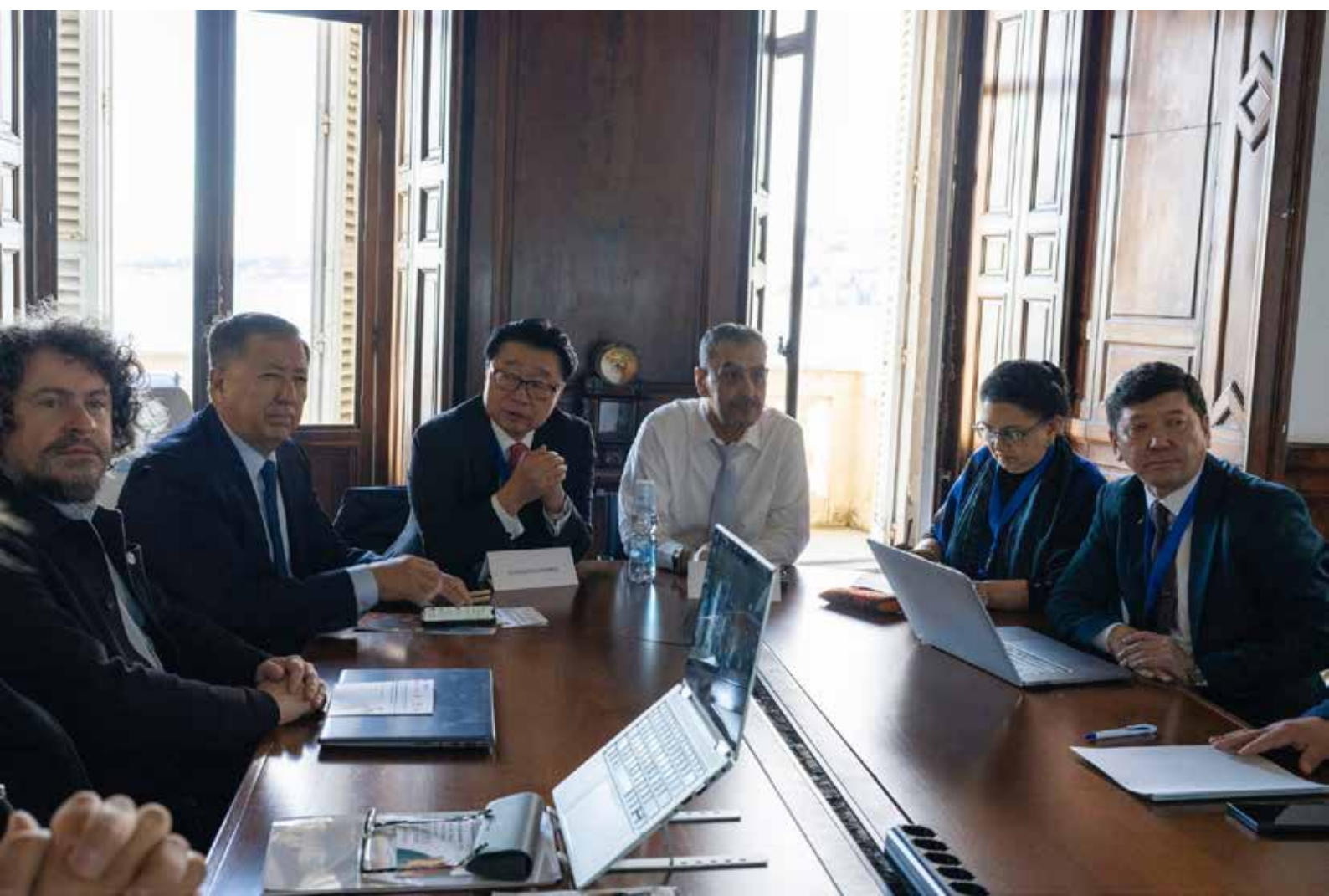
- Silk Road Language and Literature
Forum led by Uzbekistan State
University of World Languages
- Silk Road Mayors Forum led by
“WeGo,” an international city
network chaired by the Seoul
Metropolitan City Government, which
is composed of more than 260 cities
all over the world

Q: In a previous interview with *SILKROADIA*, Dr. Roberto Tottoli, Rector of the University of Naples L’Orientale, expressed his desire to expand the SUN network to include African universities. Could you provide more details about this plan?

A: Africa, as a continent of the oldest ancient civilizations must be included when we talk about the Silk Roads. Unfortunately, however, no African universities had joined SUN. Given this fact, we welcomed the desire of Dr. Roberto Tottoli, Rector of

the University of Naples L'Orientale, to expand the SUN network to include African universities expressed in his interview with *SILKROADIA*. His hope was especially plausible because the University of Naples “L'Orientale” has strong ties with African universities due to a long history of African studies. Thanks to the fame of his University in this respect, and the help of Dr. Chelli, President of Canadian University Dubai and the Chair University of SUN, three universities in Algeria joined SUN and participated in the General Assembly of SUN this year. I expect more African universities to join SUN from this year.

Professor Hwang and Dr. Karim Chelli, the Chairman of the SUN and the president of Canadian University Dubai, and rectors and professors of member universities during the board meeting of SUN Photo by Eui-hwan Cho



Q: USSUN, SUN's student organization, has recently formed a new leadership team. What are your expectations for their contributions to the development of SUN and USSUN?

A: Yes, the students participating in the USSUN workshop this year elected a new President of USSUN and a new Secretary-General of USSUN Secretariat. USSUN is the official student body of SUN. It is a very important component of SUN because it is expected to work for the common interest of the students of member universities of SUN which is more than 800,000.

Both the new President of USSUN and the new Secretary-General of USSUN Secretariat are European students: a student of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece for USSUN President and that of Ca'Foscari University of Venice, Italy for USSUN Secretariat. I expect them to design diverse programs that are more free, innovative, and open to the students of all member universities of SUN than ever before. As Secretary-General of SUN, I will be

glad to assist them in doing so.

Q: The 9th General Assembly concluded with the decision to hold the next meeting in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. What will be the primary focus of the Samarkand General Assembly?

A: Yes, all of the participants in the 9th General Assembly of SUN confirmed that the 10th General Assembly and the 9th Annual IASS conference are to be hosted by the Samarkand International University of Technology in Uzbekistan. The overall theme and dates will be announced soon before February. One thing is quite obvious; a primary focus will be given to the re-interpretation of Samarkand, an iconic city of the Silk Roads, as a fountain of wisdom for the sustainability of civilization. The IASS conference will be organized as a venue of interdisciplinary research collaboration so that the result of activities by the diverse forums established at Naples in 2024 can be visualized.

Q: Looking ahead, what challenges do you foresee for SUN in the coming years,

and how does the organization plan to address them?

A: SUN becomes 10 years old in 2025. It has carried out diverse programs for the students, professors, and administrators of member universities. The programs and activities of SUN were attractive enough for SUN to grow as an international network organization consisting of 87 universities in 69 cities and 29 countries along the land and maritime Silk Roads from Portugal to Korea. I would like to express my deep appreciation to those who have committed themselves to the development of SUN that we now see. SUN anticipates a number of challenges in the coming years. Sustainability and international visibility are the most critical. For sustainability, two things are important. One is to improve the quality of membership in addition to its quantity. Those universities which have maintained membership without active participation in the activities of SUN have to be persuaded to be more active. The other is to carry out our programs in a way that universities can recognize the bene-

fits of becoming a member of SUN more tangibly than ever. Regarding international visibility, SUN will continue its efforts to strengthen the partnership with other international organizations sharing similar values and missions.

The effort of SUN to obtain consultative status from the UN Economic and Social Council this year is quite important. I would like to cordially ask our member universities to support this effort of SUN.



Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

Students Share Their Thoughts on the SUN General Assembly

The 2024 General Assembly of the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) marked another milestone in fostering international collaboration and cultural exchange. This year, the event witnessed the



Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

enthusiastic participation of 26 students from diverse universities, embodying the spirit of global unity that SUN represents.

Representing their respective universities, the students gave engaging presentations about their countries, cultures, and academic institutions. Through these, they also shared their personal passions and aspirations, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for the diverse backgrounds within the group.

One of the key highlights of the assembly was the election of the new USSUN leadership team. Students actively participated in the voting process, demonstrating their commitment to shaping the future of the network.

The cultural sharing session was another memorable aspect of the event. Participants bonded over lively dance performances and cultural exchanges, celebrating their diversity through joy and camaraderie. These moments provided a platform for students to connect on a personal level, bridging cultural gaps and building lifelong friendships.

Additionally, the students explored the streets of Naples together, visiting iconic sites and immersing themselves in the local Italian culture. This shared experience not only enriched their understanding of Italy's rich heritage but also strengthened the sense of unity among the group.

Reflecting on the experience, the students expressed their deep satisfaction with the program. "It was a privilege to represent my university and share my dreams with such an inspiring group of peers," one participant shared. Another added, "Walking through the streets of Naples with students from around the world was an unforgettable experience that highlighted the beauty of cultural exchange."

The success of the 2024 General As-

sembly underscores the importance of initiatives like SUN in cultivating a new generation of global leaders. With fresh perspectives and strengthened bonds, the students left the event ready to carry forward the ideals of unity, collaboration, and mutual understanding in their respective journeys.

Below, we share some of their thoughts and reflections from Students.



Maria Pourlioti

Tracing the Path of a Modern Silk Road: Reflections on the 9th GA

November 2024 Naples serves as a central hub for the multi-diverse academic network that brought together people from all corners of the world. The Silk-Road University Network is successfully reviving the spirit of the ancient Silk Road, actively seeking immediate ways to foster international scientific and cultural collaboration.

Although five days usually seems sufficient for such an event, in this case it felt too brief. Days and hours were packed with experiences, knowledge, and emotions. The organizing committee flawlessly orchestrated the entire event, with its members consistently smiling and eager to help. Their exceptional behind-the-scenes



Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

efforts were clearly reflected in the conference's excellent execution. Also, the hospitality provided by the L' Orientale team was equally outstanding. Both students and faculty worked tirelessly to provide a comprehensive experience and ensure the comfort and satisfaction of everyone.

Perhaps what stood out the most was the opportunity for genuine communication. In an era where interpersonal contact often falters for various reasons, the conference provided a rare chance for honest interaction between the two main groups in attendance: professors and speakers on the one side and students and participants on the other. It is truly vital for participants to feel like an organic part

of the conference rather than to have a detached, decorative role. In this way a sincere sense of unity and equality prevailed. Younger attendees approached seasoned scholars without hesitation, as they were keen to listen and accept the perspectives of the younger generation. Moreover, their presentations were enlightening, offering deeper insights into the historical journey of the Silk Road rather than just summarized information.

Beyond the intellectual stimulation another invaluable aspect emerged: the creation of meaningful bonds and the foundation of new friendships. Although some might see these sentiments as excessive, the bonding undeniably added a genuine human touch to the meeting. Young people from diverse backgrounds came together, exchanged ideas and cultural elements, shared moments, and connected both mentally and emotionally.

Given the Network's status and prestige, expanding into other countries is vital for consolidating its worldwide influence. In order to achieve this, current members should participate consistently in SUN's

activities and strategically promote them within student communities. Furthermore, making the Network more practical in its approach could yield substantial benefits. As a coalition of scientists, SUN can, and perhaps must, aim for independent recognition within the broader academic community by engaging in research initiatives. Experienced professors collaborating with ambitious young researchers could develop projects that benefit both the individuals involved and the Network as a whole.

As the new elected President of US-SUN alongside my dear friend, Muhayyo Odilxojaeva, as vice-president, I aim to honor the longstanding efforts of the Network's leaders and volunteers. We must reciprocate the support and trust shown by friends and peers, ensuring our voice serves as a means to represent student needs to the Network's directors. While evaluating the feasibility of proposed actions, our enthusiasm for the work fuels numerous ideas for the future: establishing research teams, creating an academic journal to publish work across various disciplines, organizing accredited language

courses, compiling a collective work on the history of the Silk Road and founding a virtual reading club to cultivate literary interest and highlight significant national literary treasures. For any of these ideas to materialize, members must maintain frequent contact and foster direct collaboration. Over the coming year, my primary goal is to promote the network both in Greece and in other countries, leveraging every available means, such as social media, as my friends Manfei Zhu and Muhayyo have already emphasized.

The conference leaves a bittersweet aftertaste: sweet, for the love and experiences it brought; bitter, for the fear of losing even the smallest details of what we shared. For now, I hold on tight to the smiles, the hearty laughter, the dances, the songs, and the heartfelt farewell on our final evening together. Until the SUN rises again next year in Uzbekistan!

Maria Pourlioti is a fourth-year Master's student of Department of Philology (Specialty: Classics, Applied Linguistics) at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.



Manfei Zhu

Unforgettable Memories: The 9th SUN GA

This conference is truly unforgettable for me and marks one of the most significant moments in my life. SUN's activities—photography and writing—hold profound meaning. These photos and writings allow us to see the world more clearly and touch the depths of our inner selves.

Thanks to SUN, we gathered in Naples, Italy, coming from various places and different countries. From strangers at the start, we shared the different cultures of each country and we grew into a united family. We celebrated each other's achievements, applauded every award, and took pride in our own speeches. All of this was

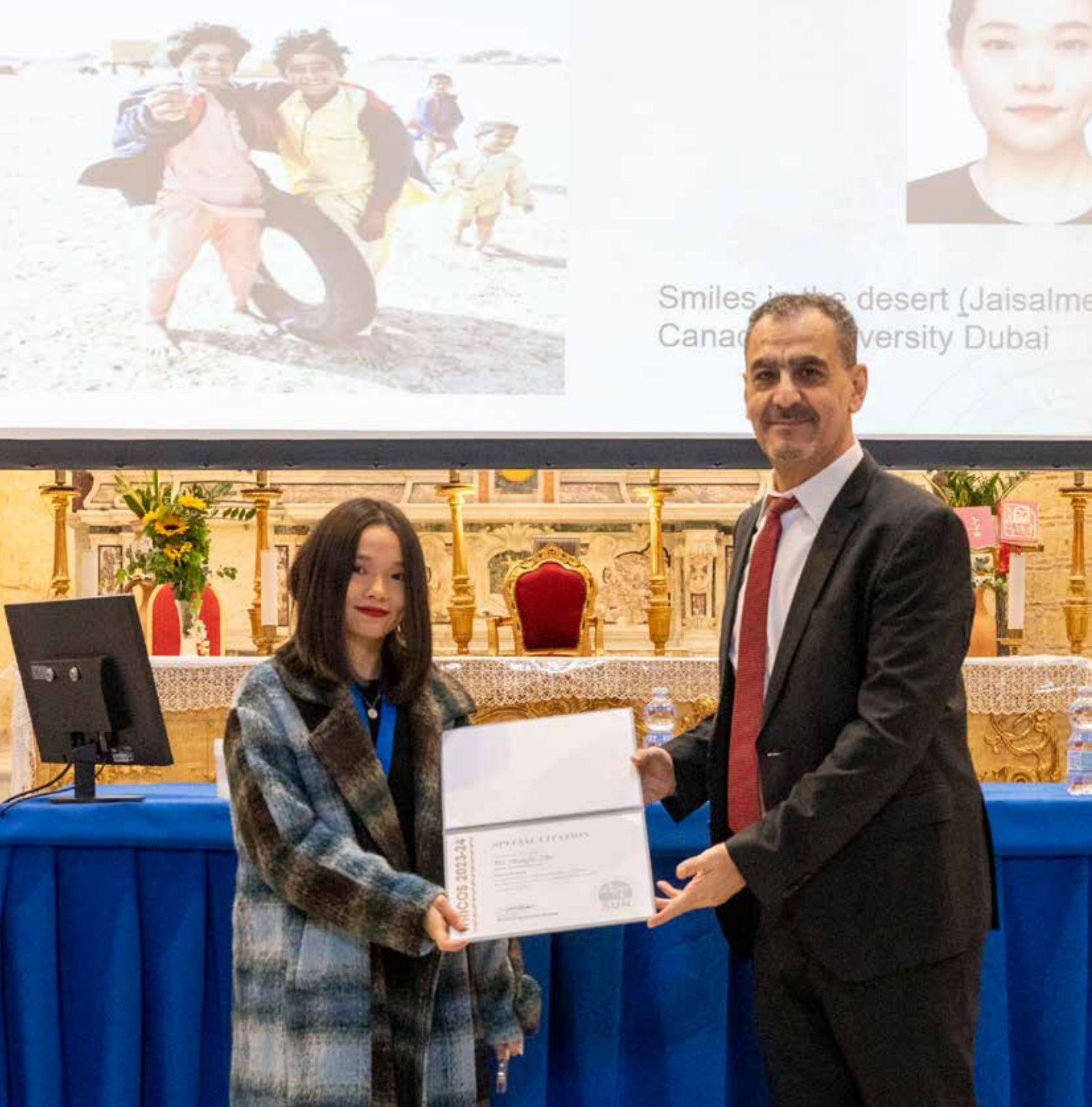


Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

made possible by the 9th SUN event.

The farewell remains vivid in my memory—the beautiful music and moving dances still linger in my mind. As I scroll through the photos and videos on my phone, it feels as though we are still together, never truly apart. Thank you, SUN, for this extraordinary experience. Can't wait to attend the 10th SUN!

Manfei Zhu is a Student of EAP(English for Academic Purposes) at Canadian University Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

As the 9th General Assembly of the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) concludes, the memories of this unforgettable event linger in the hearts of all participants. The bonds forged, ideas exchanged, and dreams shared during these days will serve as a foundation for even greater collaboration and unity in the future.

With the next assembly set to take place in Uzbekistan, the SUN network continues to expand its influence and inspire a new generation of global leaders. The promise of further initiatives—academic projects, cultural exchanges, and innovative programs—highlights the network’s commitment to fostering international cooperation and mutual understanding.

Until we meet again under the SUN in Uzbekistan, the spirit of this global community will continue to shine brightly in the hearts of all who were part of this journey.



Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

Highlights of the 9th SUN General Assembly and the 8th IASS Conference in Naples, Italy



Min-ju Sung



Min-song Kim

11 November 2024: Arrival Day / Preliminary Events

On November 11, 2024, as the weather turned from autumn into a chilly winter, the 9th General Assembly of Silk-Road Universities Network and the 8th IASS Conference was begun in Naples, Italy.

On the first day of the assembly, there was a reception held at the Basilica di San Giovanni Maggiore near Università L'Orientale, which is surrounded by the impressive Baroque and neo-classical architecture and has a long memorable history. Each participant gathered in the basilica and received their name cards, conference materials within booklets, and mementos throughout the registration process.

Photo by Eui-hwan Cho



This reception on the first day was not only an official beginning for the event but also a valuable opportunity for participants to reconnect with colleagues they hadn't seen in a while and talk about their lives and work. University presidents and academic leaders, advisory committee, student representatives, and invited guests from all around the world attend this prestigious event, and they share an invaluable time to strengthen academic networking and collaborative cooperation within the Silk Road cultural region, including the goals and expectations of the conference. The event venue was full of a palpable sense of anticipation in the air, with many expressing hopes that this assembly would be a pivotal moment for advancing research and education and connecting networks in the Silk Road cultural region.

Following the reception, participants headed to the Conservatorio della Musica for a concert organized by Università L'Orientale. The 20-minute walk through the colorful streets of Naples also provided further opportunities for informal exchanges among the attendees and looking

around the beautiful night view of Naples city.

The musical concert, which is based on the traditional cultures of Asian countries such as Indonesia and Japan etc, beautifully showed off the diverse traditions of the Silk Road region. Students from Università L'Orientale performed by using traditional instruments and dances, highlighting

Concert performances

Photo by Eui-hwan Cho



the unique cultural characteristics of Asia. Performance over the course of two-hours vividly conveyed the affluence of Silk Road culture, with a particularly stunning fusion of traditional and modern elements. Many audiences were deeply impressed by the concert, which highlighted the diverse and vibrant cultures that evolved along the Silk Road.

After the concert, the participants rounded the day off with a pizza party at Mammina, one of Naples' renowned pizzerias. As Naples is very famous for its juicy pizza, this pizza party offered a chance for participants to share this iconic dish with people from diverse cultural backgrounds while enjoying the first evening of the assembly. And at that time, Napolitan and the chef of the restaurant told the story about the history of Italian pizza, the recipe for authentic Italian pizza, and some funny episodes about pizza.

Thus, the pizza party was more than just a dinner event; it provided a unique opportunity for informal interactions and personal connections. Participants exchanged insights into various cultures, be-

ginning with Italian pizza traditions, and expressed their enthusiasm for the upcoming sessions. This fostered a strong sense of collaboration and mutual exchange, which is central to the event. As the evening concluded, attendees departed with a heightened sense of anticipation for the remaining sessions of the conference.

12 November 2-24: Official Start of the Conference

- 1) Opening Ceremony
- 2) Administrative Proceeding for the General Assembly
- 3) Award Ceremony
- 4) Luncheon
- 5) IASS Conference, Opening Session
- 6) Plenary Session_A special session dedicated to the 300th Anniversary of Matteo Ripa's Return to Italy from China
- 7) Dinner

A Promising Start: Formal Opening of the Conference



Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

The 9th General Assembly of Silk-Road Universities Network and the 8th IASS Conference officially commence on November 12, 2024 in the Basilica di San Giovanni Maggiore, Naples. Following the upbeat events of the previous day, participants gathered early in the morning to mark the official commencement of the conference.

The day's events began with the opening ceremony including the procession of university flags and representatives. The flag ceremony started with the flag of Italy, which is the host country, followed by those of four organizations: SUN, USSUN, UPSUN, and IASS. Flags from the host and chair universities, including Università



Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

L'Orientale in Naples, Canadian University Dubai, and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in South Korea, were carried in procession.

Next, all the attendees pray for peace and harmony in line with the Silk Road spirit by a moment of silence to honor the victims of tragic incidents along the Silk Road, then the assembly was officially announced.

The official opening of the event followed, with Welcoming and Opening Speeches marking the beginning of the conference. Francesco Senese, Advisor to the Mayor of Naples on International Affairs, Dr. Roberto Tottoli, Rector of University of Naples L'Orientale, Prof. Adrino



Photos by Eui-hwan Cho

Rossi, President of the International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies each offered a welcoming address. And Prof. Karim Chelli, Chairman of SUN and President of Canadian University Dubai gave the opening address. Thus, the 9th GA's theme was announced: "Toward a stronger and more effective research col-



Opening session of IASS Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

laboration among member universities of SUN (the Silk-Road University Network)”

Next, for congratulatory speeches Speakers included Tiziana Lippiello, Rector of Ca’ Foscari University of Venice; Wu Junru, Co-Director of the Istituto Confucio; and Shimada Ryuto, Professor at the University of Tokyo. Afterward, participants gathered for a group photo chanting the symbol of SUN; “SUN SUN SUN”, followed by a coffee break.

Following the opening ceremony, the General Assembly proceeded with its administrative tasks. This included the Annual Report of SUN, presented by Prof. Sungdon Hwang, the Secretary-General of SUN, and the Report on Audit Results by

Prof. Sharma Dwivedi Anand Prakash. This session was the important part to inspect and share the overall annual report and financial report. All the delegations from SUN member universities could check on SUN's activities



Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

and budget usage during the year through these annual reports sessions. The session concluded with a Q&A session, after which resolutions were approved, and new members were elected and appointed.

Annually, SUN organizes a variety of contests, such as the PHOCOS photography competition, WRICOS writing contest, and the S-DECOS speech and debate contest. The Award Ceremony was a quiet key moment of the day, where four winners

participated to receive awards in person: Manfei Zhu (PHOCOS 2023-2024 Special Citation, Canadian University Dubai), Dashdulam Batbold (WRICOS 2023-2024 Poem Excellence Award, Mongolian National University of Arts and Culture), Byambasuren Erdenebayar (WRICOS 2023-2024 Essay Grand Prize, National University of Mongolia) and Maria Poulioti (WRICOS Essay Special Selection, Ca' Foscari University of Venice).

Many students from around the world participated in the contest, though some couldn't attend due to personal reasons and visa complications. Nevertheless, the ceremony ended with warm-hearted congratulations to all the winners, including those who were absent, promoting a sense of unity among all attendees.

At the buffet lunch held in the basilica, participants took the opportunity to relax, converse, and make connections with colleagues from around the world.

After the official opening of the 9th SUN General Assembly, the 8th IASS Conference began with much excitement and energy. The 8th IASS's theme was "From Silk Road

to World History Civilizations: Heroes, Conquerors, and Adventurers.” The session was introduced by Prof. Patrizia Carloti of the University of Naples L’Orientale and President of IASS. It was followed by keynote speeches from Prof. Michele Bernardini, Coordinator of the PhD Program in Asia, Africa, and the Mediterranean at the University of Naples L’Orientale, and His Excellency Mr. Chong-ha Yoo, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Korea and Chairperson of the International Advisory Committee of SUN.

After a brief intermission, a special plenary session was held to mark the 300th anniversary of Matteo Ripa’s return to Italy from China. This session offered deep insights into Ripa’s legacy, with presentations from Donatella Guida (University of Naples L’Orientale) on ‘Matteo Ripa’s Journey: From Kangxi’s Court to a New Vision for China,’ Annachiara Trapani (University of Naples L’Orientale) exploring ‘Building a Legacy: Matteo Ripa and the Chinese College in Naples,’ and Carlo Vecce (University of Naples L’Orientale) on ‘Towards a Global World: Matteo Ripa’s Literary Leg-

acy.’ The discussions held were especially significant for upcoming SUN initiatives linked to Ripa’s influence. After these insightful presentations, a lively Q&A session provided attendees with an opportunity to explore the topic further and share their perspectives.

Lastly, like the previous evening, attendees enjoyed dinner at Mammina. Participants enjoyed the renowned Neapolitan pizza, and the dinner provided a perfect opportunity to relax, reflect on the day’s events, and look forward to the sessions to come.

The official opening of the 9th General Assembly of the Silk-Road Universities Network and the 8th IASS Conference was a

Dinner at Mammina Photo by Eui-hwan Cho



successful event, setting a positive tone for the rest of the conference. The activities on November 11th and 12th offered participants crucial opportunities for engaging in meaningful academic dialogue and cultural exchange. These gatherings not only encouraged deep scholarly discussions but also laid the groundwork for future international partnerships. As the conference progressed, it became apparent that these moments of shared understanding and collaboration would nurture long-lasting connections and create opportunities for ongoing dialogue, setting the foundation for a more interconnected future in both academic and cultural spheres.

13 November 2025: Cultural Tour Day

On November 13th, GA participants went on a cultural tour of Eboli and Paestum, while the students spent time socializing and exploring the city. The special reason for choosing Eboli as the destination for the cultural tour was its history as the



Crypt of St. Berneiro in the Basilica of San Pietro Alli Marmi in Eboli Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

birthplace of Matteo Ripa, founder of the University of Naples L'Orientale. For the GA guests, the City of Eboli provided a special session on Matteo Ripa, explaining about his life in Eboli and his accomplishments as a missionary to China and as the founder of the oldest school of Sinology and Oriental Studies of the European continent.

After a lunch graciously provided by the City of Eboli, the guests departed to the archaeological site of Paestum, a major ancient Greek city on the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea in what was once part of Magna Graecia. The guests especially enjoyed visiting the Paestum archaeological park and



USSUN students explore Naples photo by Yu-jeong Lee

museum.

Meanwhile, with Italian students as the tour guides, the students explored the city of Naples. They started at the Napoli Cathedral (Naples Cathedral Duomo di San Gennaro) and explored shops selling typical souvenirs of Naples such as Christmas ornaments, red horns, and hand painted majolica ceramics.

The most interesting story told by the Italian students was the recurring ‘miracle’ that occurs in Napoli on feast of San Gennaro, a bishop of Benevento in the third century, whose bones and blood are preserved as relics at the cathedral. According to the story, inside the Chapel of the Treasure of San Gennaro of the cathedral



Crypt of St. Berneiro in the Basilica of San Pietro Alli Marmi in Eboli Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

is a bust of San Gennaro, inside which is a sealed glass ampoule containing his skull and clotted blood. The miracle is that on three dates every year (19 September, 16 December and the first Saturday in May.), the clotted blood becomes liquid and flows as if Gennaro were alive. People call these days “Miracle Days of San Gennaro.” On each occasion people gather in the cathedral to witness the liquefaction, and according to local lore, the failure of the bloods’ liquefaction signals imminent disaster which includes war, famine or disease.

At the end of the tour, the students enjoyed pasta bought from a famous takea-

way pasta shop near the University, while showing off what they bought from the local souvenir shops and talking about their countries' unique cultures.

14 November 2024:
UPSUN & USSUN Workshop / Board Meeting
Closing Ceremony of the 9th GA & the 8th IASS
Farewell Dinner

The agenda for November 14th brought to a conclusion the main program and finalize the 9th General Assembly. The UPSUN/USSUN Workshop and the SUN Board Meeting were planned for the GA Session, and the Closing Ceremony and the Farewell Dinner were held for both the GA & IASS Session.

During the UPSUN workshop, the delegations of each member university gave a 10-15 minute presentation under the main theme: “How to strengthen the research cooperation and collaboration among the member universities of SUN.” In addition



UPSUN Workshop Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

to presenting ideas about the main theme, delegations also proposed suggestions for research collaboration and cooperation among the SUN member universities, ways to enhance the quality of research/education activities which are conducted by the member universities, and ideas for programs that member universities could collaborate and promote student exchanges and realize the essence values of the Silk Roads.

At the same time of the UPSUN workshop, the USSUN workshop was going on with the student representatives of member universities and the awardees of PHOCOS and WRICOS. The students gave a



USSUN Workshop Photo by Min-song Kim

10-15 minute presentation about the past USSUN activities within their home university, future plans for USSUN activities, and further ideas to strengthen cooperation and networks between the students. Some of the students also introduced their traditional cultures during the presentation, making the workshop more fruitful and harmonious. The students respected each other's unique culture and all agreed to the common goal that should be achieved until the next USSUN workshop: spreading the beauty of cultural diversity and utilizing student networks for activities promoting peace and prosperity in the modern Silk Roads.

Immediately after the USSUN Workshop, the delegations of board member univer-



Board Meeting of SUN Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

sities gathered to conduct the 2024 SUN Board Meeting. During the meeting, they mainly reviewed and confirmed the SUN activities planned for 2025, went through the process of confirming the host universities for the GA in 2025, 2026, and 2027, and dealt with the issue of changing the location of the SUN headquarters. Additionally, they also dealt with issues regarding the operation of SUN. A lot of ideas were proposed and improvement plans for the overall SUN activities were established by the board members, confirming areas to improve and reform for better operation.

The closing ceremony of the 9th GA & the 8th IASS, took place at Palazzo Du



Closing Ceremony Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

Mesnil. Professor D.A.P. Sharma, Professor Patrizia Carioti, Professor Ronald Steiner, and Professor Dorota Majewicz each gave reports about the summary of the whole General Assembly, IASS sessions, UPSUN workshop and USSUN workshop. Next, Professor Sungdon Hwang, the Secretary-General of SUN, delivered appreciation plaques to Professor Roberto Tottoli, the Rector of the University of Naples L'Orientale, and Professor Patrizia Carioti, the President of IASS, who made the utmost effort for co-organizing the event with SUN.

After receiving feedback about the events from the participants, Professor Carioti passed the flag of SUN to Professor



Farewell party Photo by Eui-hwan Cho

Hwang, who is one of the deans of Samarkand International University of Technology (SIUT), officially announcing SIUT as the host University of the 10th General Assembly in 2025.

“SUN! SUN! SUN!” This was the chant that united all the participants from the beginning till the end. By shouting the same chant, people of different nationalities from more than 10 countries shared the values of peace and harmony deep in their hearts. “Promoting peace and harmony in line with Silkroadia (the Spirit of Ancient Silk Road).” This is one of the main goals and purposes at which SUN aims. Big smiles, warm hugs, and words of encour-

agement between the participants during the farewell party showed how successful the 9th GA was in achieving its ultimate goal.

In a world full of segregation and conflicts, harmony and cooperation offer global citizens the path to mutual understanding, collective progress, and shared prosperity. By suggesting valuable ways to enhance international cooperation among member universities and, furthermore, by building everlasting human networks and friendships regardless of age and nationality, the 9th GA has successfully achieved its primary purpose to strengthen the network power of SUN. Until this power becomes an undying flame that never goes out, SUN's effort for peace and harmony will never be extinguished.

Min-ju Sung is a student of Persian and Iranian studies, Business Department at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Korea.

Min-song Kim is a student of English Literature & Culture, Language & Trade Department at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Korea.

Cristian Mungiu: Romania's voice of our shared human struggle



Cameron Shirvani Steiner

“You don’t have to fight to straighten the image of your country: You have to straighten the country. You must speak about problems openly.”

Cristian Mungiu

A child of mid-century communist rule, filmmaker Cristian Mungiu has emerged from modern Romania as one of the eminent voices of not just his generation, but perhaps the entirety of his country’s cinematic history. An impressive ascendance for an artist of his biography: born in 1968, in the eastern university city



Cristian Mungiu Mobra Film

of Iași, which then had a population less than 200,000, cinema occupied a limited place in his adolescence. “I lived in the 70s and 80s in Romania. I’m not from Bucharest. I’m not from the capital...There were some seven cinemas, although not one is left today, but we didn’t have a cinematheque” (Goodfellow, 2015). It was not until the arrival of VCRs in the 1980s, and a traveling cinematheque that visited twice a year, that Mungiu would discover works beyond both Romania’s commercial films and its single TV channel.

Mungiu did not initially travel down the filmmaker’s path, instead studying English literature at the University of Iași and working as a journalist, just in time for the

fall of dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu and the early days of post-revolution Romania. After a number of years in the press of his hometown (“People were stopping you on the street, asking you to tell them the truth after years and years”), Mungiu finally embraced cinema by enrolling at the Academy of Theatre and Film in Bucharest, although he left with his education still incomplete. “In four years of studying we never went beyond the 1940s. They didn’t have any copies of the films we were studying - it was theoretical” (Goodfellow, 2015). It was at the Academy, nevertheless, that he made his first connections to the industry, directing eight short films before graduation in 1998. His debut feature film, *Occident* (2002), released only four years later, was featured at that year’s Cannes Film Festival.

The following years would see Mungiu’s profile rise only further – alongside the generation of fellow filmmakers emerging from the 2000s – ushering in Eastern Europe’s next cinematic movement, the Romanian New Wave. This New Wave, and the history and philosophies that shaped

it, was the cinematic landscape in which Mungiu's work took form.

ROMANIAN NEW WAVE

The fall of a 42-year reign took only 6 days in December 1989. The Romanian revolution was one of a number of revolutions occurring within Eastern Bloc countries in that momentous year. Beginning as a local uprising in the city of Timișoara on 16 December, the violent and fatal crackdown by the country's military and secret police (the Securitate) provoked a widespread civil unrest that, in a matter of days, reached the capital Bucharest. The leader Ceaușescu and his wife Elena attempted to flee on 22 December, only to be captured, tried via a tribunal, and executed on Christmas Day. The most violent of the 1989 revolutions, Romania saw over 1,100 people killed and over 3,000 injured (Paun, 2019), and many civilians were shot and killed in the days following Ceaușescu's ouster. The scale and speed of the revolution was a country-wide shockwave, with Mungiu himself observing: "All of sudden this unexpected thing happened. Even if

we were aware of what was happening in Eastern Germany and all the Eastern countries we couldn't figure out how it would happen in Romania" (Goodfellow, 2015).

Modern Romania, as it stepped out from behind the fallen Iron Curtain, continued to express itself in the shadow of its totalitarian past, grappling with the scars left on its society as well as questions about the shock-therapy transition to its present place within global capitalism. It is in this context that the Romanian New Wave came into view, rising from the "embers of the 1989 revolution" (Roddick, 2007), with the country's film industry dominated by a generation who experienced it in their youths. Occurring alongside cinematic movements from neighboring Balkan nations, Romania's international emergence is nevertheless notable for a country whose cinema in the 20th century was as out-of-view as Romania itself.

Interestingly, Romania's mid-20th century disappearing act appears to be, on further consideration, to some extent the fault of international film critics and historians themselves. A read through Roma-

nian film history reveals a richer story, including Liviu Ciulei winning Best Director at Cannes for *Forest of the Hanged* in 1965, the same year that Lucian Pintilie, who would become a regular at international festivals, made his feature film debut with *Sunday at Six* (Bergan, 2008). Romanian cinema, in fact, may have been more successful during its years under Ceaușescu: the nation's state film studio churned out commercial films that sold 95 million tickets each year, far above the 2.7 million tickets sold in 2006. But whatever their artistic merits, these films were seen only by local audiences (Romanian state cinema was almost never screened outside the country), and their depictions of life in the country in the country were, according to Mungiu, "ridiculous...There was a huge gap between the way people really talked and the kinds of things that happened on screen" (Roddick, 2007).

The stylistic traits of the Romanian New Wave can then be understood as a narrowing of this gap between artistic reach and international reception. In stark contrast to the cinematic epoch of Communist-era

Romania – when filmmakers imbued their works in metaphor and indirect critique to evade the censors – the New Wave is aesthetically realist, serving as documentary-like observations of Romanian society with stylistic minimalism, including the limited use of music both diegetic and non-diegetic (Bergan, 2008). Here's Mungiu in an interview with NPR: “I want my films to be as close to reality as possible and as, let's say, objective as possible...the thing that I'm trying to mimic in the films is to identify a way of staging the situations in which you can follow them as a spectator from your single own point of view without me as a director telling you what's important, what's not important and cutting out what's not important” (Simon, 2023). This neorealism is borne of an near-obligation to bring an everyday reality to a past steeped in falsehoods, which points to another distinguishing trait: many of the films of the New Wave, particularly at its beginning, tell stories of late 1980s Romania, near the end of Ceaușescu's rule, and people struggling for their own personal freedom or grappling with a sea of change

in motion.

British critic Nick Roddick suggested that Romania, precisely because it was one of the poorest of the countries in the New Europe, produced powerful and critically successful films because the Romanian film industry had no infrastructure and no large budgets; the strength of the films came from the way the directors “made virtue out of necessity” (Bergen). No CGI, no complicated stunts, no high tech explosions – Romanian films had to make their mark with the basics: acting, story, cinematography, editing, and direction. As Mungiu has put it, there are “no tricks,” just hard work (Filimon). But this is the same story that resulted in the celebrated Iranian New Wave and in the work of the best of the new generation of filmmakers emerging from along the Silk Road. Like the old master Abbas Kiarostami and the contemporary Mongolian filmmaker Byambasuren Davaa, Mungiu makes art from the often arduous commitment to long, stationary camera setups and “sequence shots.” Mungiu has described the Romanian New Wave as “two hours and a

half of long takes and no music,” acknowledging that it doesn’t cater to a casual audience, but he argues that long takes in a medium camera distance helps construct the realism of these films in an almost documentary style (Filimon). In that realism, “the question of moral responsibility for the fate of others is at the core of the New Romanian Cinema,” and, like Abbas Kiarostami and Iran’s New Wave, Mungiu and his fellow Romanian auteurs are “preoccupied with alienation, ethical accountability, and the nature and value of truth” (Filimon).

The Past and Present of Romania in the Romanian New Wave

Let it not be said that the Romanian New Wave only told stories of its country’s past; even as the movement began, films set in modern-day Romania, delving into a society shaped by a transition into democracy and free-market capitalism, made international waves. This includes the film often credited with launching the New Wave to a higher recognition, Cristi Puiu’s black comedy *The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu* (2005).

The story of an old man in Bucharest trekking from hospital to hospital as doctors stubbornly refuse to treat him, the film is an exemplar of the New Wave style to come, with gallows humour observations and a meticulous attention to detail delivered in naturalistic performances and static-camera long takes that simply record the events occurring in front of it (Roddick, 2007). More importantly, it represents one of the first thematic depictions of a society that, years from the shock and euphoria of the revolution, must now look with a critical gaze to the country of today, a theme that only became more prominent in the more recent years of the New Wave.

A standout among Romanian filmmakers, Cristian Mungiu's filmography is also illustrative of the movement's changes. Mungiu's breakout film, *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (2007), was so distinctive critics referred to it as "that Romanian film, as if it were some weird phenomenon" (Bergen). Though the film won the Palme d'Or at Cannes, it was totally snubbed by the Oscars, leading to a scorching condemnation from Scott Foundas, then chief film critic

for the L.A. Weekly and later for Variety “How Do You Say ‘Oscar Scandal’ in Romanian?” (Wells), and ultimately to a major re-working of the Oscars’ vetting process for international films (Foundas, 2009). Based on a true story of one of Mungiu’s friends, and representative of many other such true stories, *4 Months* is a wrenchingly realistic portrayal of a young college female student Găbița seeking out an illegal abortion with the assistance of her roommate Otilia, the real protagonist of the film, who remains steadfastly loyal despite the awkward incompatibility in their not-quite friendship and the increasingly painful stakes involved in the quest. In the style Mungiu mastered with his cinematographer Oleg Mutu, the film is constructed of long, extended scenes, including an heroic 25-minute unbroken sequence, which led Mungiu to cast theater actors who were more comfortable with memorizing and then acting out long scenes rather than the short takes common in films (Foundas, 2008).



4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days Mobra Film

Despite a brutally realistic scene of an aborted fetus on a bathroom floor, the film is less about abortion per se than about the tragedies of the communist era, and even transcendent questions about the responsibility people have to one another.

Indeed, Mungiu originally planned for 4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days to inaugurate a series of films with the theme of “Tales from a Golden Age” – an ironic reference to Ceaușescu’s manic final years in power. He modified this plan and in 2009 released a single film called “Tales from the Golden Age,” which was screened in the Un Certain Regard section of the 2009 Cannes Film Festival. This was an anthology film of six black comedy short stories based on common urban legends reflecting the absurdities of the era, with Mungiu as producer sharing the directing role with four directors of the Romanian New Wave (Porton).

However, Mungiu insists that Romania must interrogate not only its past from that “golden era.” In 2012 he wrote, directed, and produced (with the production company Mobra that he formed with cinematographer Oleg Mutu) *Beyond the Hills*, based again on a true story, but this time a case from the post-communist era in 2005. In a script that won the Best Screenplay Prize at Cannes 2012, Mungiu tells the story of two young women at a remote mon-



Beyond the Hills Mobra Film

astery who wrestle with a choice between the apparent security of traditional order and the uncertainty of personal freedom in a case where allegations of demonic possession led to abuse and death.

Once again. Mungiu and Mutu enhance the psychological realism with similar realism in handheld but steady, medium distance, extended one-shot takes and well-framed images of the bleak but often foreboding beauty of Romania. The horror in *Beyond the Hills* lies not in any supernatural elements, but in the all-to-real temptations of dogma and discipline in the face of the disruptive potential of new-found freedoms in a society still emerging from life under a regime of pervasive control (Roddick 2013). Yet, as in *4 Months*, Mungiu refuses to simplify the complex

reality of life, and even the stern Master of the convent is respected as a man with great responsibilities trying to do his best for those who depend on him in a confusing and unsupportive new world. Thus, he sends the disruptive Alina off to the under resourced local hospital to be evaluated, but the burned out and indifferent staff send her back, telling him to resolve the problem himself. There is no arch-villain, just a broken and inhumane system incapable of taking responsibility and imposing it on individuals who are struggling to get by.

BEYOND THE NEW WAVE

Stepping resolutely into the most up-to-the-minute concerns, Mungiu's latest film, *R.M.N.* (2022), is titled for the Romanian acronym for nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR in English), because Mungiu sees the film as "an investigation of the brain, a brain scan trying to detect things below the surface" (Mungiu).

True to his documentary style, the film is based on true events from 2019. A village with a complicated and painful his-

tory of strife between ethnic Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, and Roma breaks out into new cleavages over the arrival of a few workers from Sri Lanka, brought in because so many locals had left to work in Western Europe. Not appreciating the irony, those expats returning for a holiday visit stir up tensions against the new workers and the bakery that hired them. Mungiu says he aims to “question the dilemmas of today’s society: solidarity vs. individualism, tolerance vs. selfishness, political correctness vs.sincerity” (Mungiu).

Mungiu’s realistic film style again complements the near documentary quality of the film. One remarkable scene consists of an emotional debate in a town meeting, and involves 26 speaking parts and numerous background actors in a single 17

R.M.N. IFC Films



minute take with a stationary camera. It's as if the film audience is actually in the audience of the town meeting, watching as the events unfold. Mungiu did this so as to "stage the situation as believably and as truthfully as you can and then record this moment. The rhythm doesn't come from editing, but it's internalized," and "the situation unfold in real time, nothing is cut off" (Mungiu).

Though the film is superficially about ethnic tensions in a present day rural village in Romania, it's also obviously a universal story about "Russians and Ukrainians, whites and blacks, Sunni and Shia, rich and poor, even tall and short," and the fact that "whenever there's a second person in the room, they will be perceived as being from another tribe and therefore a potential enemy." Mungiu says it's about languages, religions, flags "and other minor differences for which people kill one another" (Mungiu). The microcosm of this village captures a dark truth seen throughout the world, including even the United States, where a kind of populism prompts people to express their prejudices

and fears and, in Mungiu's words, "bring to power... kind of unreasonable people fighting against a lot of humanistic values which were acquired in years and years of education and struggle" (Simon). It addresses a universal cultural challenge in balancing the need "to belong, to identify with one's ethnic group, with one's tribe" against the natural temptation "to regard others – whether of another ethnic group, another religion, another gender, or another social class – with reservations and suspicion" (Mungiu), "It's a story about intolerance and discrimination, about prejudice, stereotypes, authority, and freedom. It is a story about cowardice and courage, about the individual and the masses, about personal versus collective destiny" (id.).

CONCLUSION

Mungiu's early films, and much of the Romanian New Wave, were local stories interrogating distinctively Romanian experiences of the mid-to-late 20th century, though like all good art the films suggested connections to broader human experience and moral dilemmas. But R.M.N. is a kind

of breakout film about the effects of globalization on ordinary people who want to hold onto traditions, values, and identities out of step with an order that seems to be coming from everywhere but from nowhere, and a political and cultural environment which has “burdened them with the difficulty of distinguishing the truth and their personal opinions in today’s informational and moral chaos” (Mungiu). In these themes, the Romanian New Wave has crested, in that it is no longer Romanian and no longer new. It is now utterly universal in both space and time, wrestling with the potential and challenges of our shared global humanity as so well reflected in the pages of the Silkroadia journal.

Sources

Bergen, Ronald. “Romania’s new wave is riding high.” The Guardian, 25 March 2008, Romania’s new wave is riding high | World cinema | The Guardian

Foundas, Scott (February 7, 2008). “Pregnant Pause,” The Pitch, <https://www.thepitchkc.com/pregnant-pause/>

Foundas, Scott (Jan 13, 2009). “Foundas on Film: How Do You Say ‘Oscar Scandal’ in Italian?” L.A. Weekly, <https://www.laweekly.com/foundas-on-film-how-do-you-say-oscar-scandal-in-italian/>

Goodfellow, Melanie. "Cristian Mungiu reveals first details of next film." Screendaily, 12 March 2015, Cristian Mungiu reveals first details of next film | News | Screen

Mungiu, Cristian (21 May 2022). "R.M.N. Press kit," Wild Bunch International, https://web.archive.org/web/20220521092452/https://encodeur.movidone.com/getimage/0yj9ClJjR6gjXNc caTLgabcwcFbofjLf6Zfqk8LQG8gkJOnkv1WX7WBhElsID25Ys NcU0INkdCT0BFqyYINF5LrKv8MJo9pUdczeMd15-xhp9uwx-PHCwgD2FSo9RgPig_CuS_QKbWOud4n71_pub-09uKexImiR MrYaDt8WPNQBnqmwNYXUeNMImRv_PMWgMryTGLIucakj_hPDUBEOY2sL

Paun, Carmen (25 December 2019). "Thirty years after Romanian revolution, questions remain." Politico.eu, <https://www.politico.eu/article/thirty-years-after-romanian-revolution-questions-remain-death-of-nicolae-ceaurescu/>

Porton, Richard (1 March 2008). "Not Just an Abortion Film: An Interview with Christian Mungiu". Cineaste, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A177028098/LitRC?u=anon~823dfa62&sid=sitemap&xid=1ff84056>.

Roddick, Nick (Oct. 2007). "Eastern Promise." BFI Sight & Sound, <http://old.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/feature/49399>

Roddick, Nick (14 March 2013), "Film of the week: Beyond the Hills," BFI Sight & Sound, <https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound/reviews/film-week-beyond-hills>

Simon, Scott (6 May 2023). "Romanian director Cristian Mungiu on his film 'R.M.N.'" NPR, <https://www.npr.org/2023/05/06/1174468814/romanian-director-cristian-mungiu-on-his-film-r-m-n>

Wells, Jeffrey (Jan. 15, 2008). "Foundas on '4 Months' Shafting Debacle," Hollywood Elsewhere, <https://hollywood-elsewhere.com/foundas-on-4-mo/>

Cameron Shirvani Steiner is a graduate of the Dodge College of Film & Media Arts at Chapman University in Orange County, California.

Cameron Shirvani Steiner is a graduate of the Dodge College of Film & Media Arts at Chapman University in Orange County, California.

THE 7th
WRITING
CONTEST OF
SUN

Silk-Road
Universities
Network

2023-2024

**WRICOS
WINNERS**

WINNER IN POEM



Ilma Ahmad



Lattice of Life

In arboreal sanctums where whispers flow,
Verdant sentinels guard the path we know.
Their chlorophyll symphonies, a silent song,
Woven in sylvan tapestries, ancient and long.

Perennial embrace of the roots below,
Petrichor memories where soft winds blow.
Trees, the silent witnesses of shifting sands,
Temporal scaffolding in forgotten lands.

Entwined destinies through branches reach,
Fossilized echoes in every leaf's speech.
Celestial tethers to the sky's wide arc,
Where ephemeral whispers ignite a spark.

Rooted in eternity, yet fleeting in grace,

Their canopy of constellations, a timeless
embrace.

Photosynthetic pulses, life's rhythmic tune,
Ascendant pillars under sun and moon.

Wind-borne whispers from ancient tongues,
Stories of traders, where their song is sung.
Ancestors of earth, in bark and bough,
In organic reverie, we wonder how...

How their lattice of life stretches far and wide,
A sylvan journey where the past and
present collide.

From the Silk Road's soil, rich with tales of old,
To this day, their leaves in every breeze
unfold.

Introduction to "Lattice of Life":

A tribute to trees and the Silk Roads

"Lattice of Life" is a reflective poem that uses the imagery of trees to explore interconnectedness, much like the cultural exchanges along the historic Silk Roads. The poem portrays trees as silent witnesses to human and natural history, symbolizing resilience and continuity. It blends nature with the idea of linguistic diversity, showing how ideas and languages spread and evolved like a living network of trees. Ultimately, the poem is a tribute to both the strength of nature and human culture, inspiring a deep appreciation for the connections be-

tween the environment and history.

Ilma Ahmad is a student of BBA - International Business, Canadian University of Dubai

WINNER IN ESSAY



**Byambasuren
Erdenebayar**

Ecology and Geology of the Countries on the Silk Road: Environmental Impact on Them and Trees

Today there is a strong universal focus on issues of forests, green spaces and environmental conservation, therefore I admire SUN's wisdom in choosing to write on this topic. It is well-known that clean air and fresh water are treasures in human life far more precious than gold, and that they are deeply connected to nature. To utilize properly and preserve these resources for later generations is our noble duty, as inhabitants of this Earth, as well as to create, to nurture, and to sustain green environments.

I was born in the vast, beautiful lands of

Mongolia, with soaring mountains and boundless plains, and I am proud to be raised in the Gobi Desert. Clearly, Gobi is not associated with towering mountains and lush forests, as found common in other regions; instead, it offers endless expanses of low hills and vast steppes, surrounded by arid beauty, plants and animals that have adapted to its harsh conditions. When most people hear “Gobi”, the first thing that comes to their mind is a vision of barren deserts, but our magnificent Gobi holds many awe-inspiring places. Namely, Yol Valley (valley of the bearded vultures) with dense juniper fields and rapid streams, the flaming cliffs of Bayanzag, the vast sand dunes of Khongoryn Els which mirages as it were deep ocean, and the singing hills of Duut Mankhan, the Gobi is full of natural wonders.

However, alongside these wonders, some serious challenges have emerged. In recent years, dust storms have been increasing as fast as rainfall has been decreasing, and, consequently, the desertification has become a significant concern. All who travel through or live in the Gobi have begun to realize the need and importance for tree planting. Not just planting trees, but taking care and protecting

for them are issues important as well.

Unfortunately, there are some humans, which are biologically considered to be the most intelligent species, act in ways that are harmful to nature, their destructive actions are leading to environmental degradation, evident in phenomena like desertification, aridity, and storms. These are warnings from nature which we should not disregard.

Mongolians have a rich tradition of protecting the environment, which was handed down from our ancestors. They have an intimate understanding of nature, with their lives and livelihoods closely tied to it. As nomadic people, Mongolians live in harmony with nature, not by restoring or replanting it but by preserving it in its pristine state. Ancient traditions forbid such actions as cutting of trees along river banks, breaking off branches from young or living trees, picking saplings or seedlings, cutting down any solitary or old trees even early flowers, filling with soil any holes left after uprooted trees, in overall, damaging of nature in any way. These kinds of taboos wield strict punishments as misfortune, hunger, even physical harm.

I would like to explain a ritual for making a

fire in an open field. First, one must search for a place that is free of vegetation, full of rocks and sand, then, whisper an oath with words “I shall not betray my king, I shall not set a fire on the mother nature”, and finally strike a flint. After putting out the fire, one must place a grasp of dry grass on top of the ashes as a proof that the fire was completely put out and there is no harm to the nature. These meticulous customs ensured the protection of nature.

However, modern practices are eroding these traditions. People now cut trees indiscriminately, not realizing the great harm they are causing. We must remind ourselves that the air we breathe and the environment we live in ought to be protected and preserved clean for us to be healthy. If we are healthy, we can contribute to the well-being of the Earth.

In Mongolia, where desertification and dust storms are prevalent, only 8% of the land is covered by forests. We plant trees to create fresh air, reduce soil erosion, and combat dust, which clearly is a significant ecological and moral act. Growing a tree is a laborious process that requires care and attention for years. It is not just about planting a seed; it is about nurturing and protecting it like a child.

One of the most valuable tree species in Mongolia is the Siberian Pine, whose nuts have become an economic resource for many. However, improper harvesting methods, such as hitting trees with wooden sticks to collect pine cones, are damaging the trees. This damage leaves the trees vulnerable to pests and diseases, preventing their recovery.

The trees of the world have benefited all living beings, and humans have cultivated them throughout history. Our country has declared the second Saturdays of May and October as “National Tree Planting Days,” and the “Billion Trees” initiative has become a critical project for Mongolia. Although tree planting is happening on a large scale, follow-up care is often lacking, resulting in a high failure rate.

The extreme climate of Mongolia, with its frequent droughts, zuds (harsh winters), and storms, raises the question: why has the climate changed so drastically? Our ancestors had methods and knowledge to protect the environment, but modern practices have eroded these traditions, leaving us vulnerable to climate change.

Today’s generation must relearn these ancient methods while adapting them to modern

needs. Unfortunately, the knowledge of environmental stewardship is not being passed down to younger generations as it should be. With the rise of modern technology, people have become too reliant on convenience, forgetting to care for the land. The disregard for tradition has led to significant environmental damage.

Students and young people, in particular, play a crucial role in shaping the future. If we act now, we can create a cleaner, greener world in the years to come. While it is impossible to recreate a green environment overnight, small, consistent actions can lead to meaningful change. We must practice sustainable habits, reduce waste, conserve water, and live with intention.

The most important task ahead of us is to plant trees and care for them diligently. Just as a tree's roots branch out deep into the soil, the people of the Silk Road nations must come together and unite in the fight against climate change. Only by working together can we protect our shared environment for future generations.

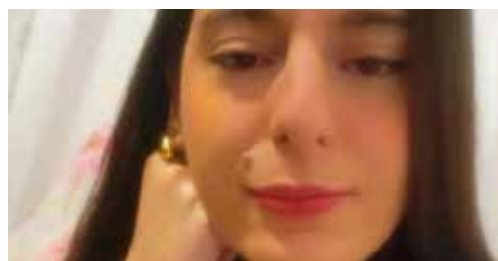
Byambasuren Erdenebayar is 4th-year student, Mongolian Language Studies Program, School of Humanities, National University of Mongolia



Typical cuisine of the Cinque Terre

TRAVEL

Cinque Terre - Jewel of the Italian Riviera



Laura Di Cuffa

In the enchanting Italian region of Liguria, one of the most enchanting and breathtaking corners of the sea is hidden, the Cinque Terre.

The Cinque Terre are a union of 3 vil-

lages and 2 hamlets, from which they take their name, which was used for the first time in the 15th century when the entire area was under the dominion of Genoa, at the time a Maritime Republic.

Recognized since 1997 by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, in addition to being internationally recognized for their breathtaking landscapes, they also have a perfect balance between culture, nature and cuisine. Subsequently, in 1998 they became a Marine Protected Area and in 1999 the Cinque Terre National Park

It is very easy to be enchanted by these lands, in addition to enjoying an excellent day at the beach under the sun, in perfect Italian style, it is also possible to try the typical cuisine of the place, often based on anchovies, pesto and focaccia, without forgetting the basis of many dishes, the mother of the ingredients of the Cinque Terre cuisine, fish.

Enjoying a nice walk in the characteristic villages you will surely notice the great attention and care that is given to the production of wine, in fact the Cinque Terre are the home of many wines, including

the Cinque Terre Doc, a very fresh and aromatic white wine, with an unmistakable flavor.

Monterosso al Mare is certainly recognized, in addition to being the largest village among the five, for its wonderful beaches, which are a tourist destination of wide international scope, but also for its wonderful squares, in which you can taste many typical products in a quiet setting of Italian daily life. The salted anchovies of Monterosso are a typical food of the place, consumed especially in salt and called “pan do’ ma” (bread of the sea), which thanks

Monterosso al Mare



to the perfect balance of the salinity of the water enjoy a unique and perfectly balanced taste. But in the past historically they represented not only a food, but also a currency of barter with the Piedmont region.

Manarola, on the other hand, can enchant you with its charming little port, a popular destination for many Italians to spend a pleasant summer day. In this village you can let your taste buds be enchanted by one of the most prized wines in Liguria, Sciacchetrà.

Vernazza, on the other hand, offers incredible and evocative landscapes, it is considered by many to be a jewel between

Manarola





Vernazza

sea and rock, a nickname due to its protected natural port that offers a unique view. Going to the medieval tower allows you to scan the horizon while enjoying the view of the entire bay.

Riomaggiore is remembered for its pulsating part, its heart, that is, the famous Marina, a characteristic coastal area from which it is possible to enjoy the landscape of the thousand houses that, climbing the hills there, create a unique and rare scenario connecting to the evocative colors of the sea.

Finally, we have Corniglia, which village is located in a hillier area, it acts as a watershed as it is located in a central position of the other four villages (Manarola



Riomaggiore

and Riomaggiore to the east, Vernazza and Monterosso to the west). The only village that does not have its historic center on the sea but still manages to enchant tourists with the peculiar view of the other lands, in fact its nickname is “The balcony of the Cinque Terre”.

All these villages, in addition to being very suggestive, also hide a huge coastal and marine biodiversity under the water surface, in conjunction with the establishment of the Marine Protected Area, the Cetacean Sanctuary was also established, born in 1999 following an international



Corniglia

agreement between Italy, the Principality of Monaco and France. A fundamental place as this part of Italy enjoys perfect climatic and environmental conditions for the passage of whales, sperm whales and other cetaceans, which can refresh themselves, thanks to the currents of plankton.

Still speaking of nature and natural beauty, the vast fields of olive trees certainly represent a typical view of the Cinque Terre, which give an exquisite and much appreciated oil. Let's not forget the lemons, which give the city a unique smell that remains in the memory of anyone who visits these areas, which, as much as it was



Cetacean Sanctuary viewers

appreciated, captured a special place in the heart of the poet Eugenio Montale and even obtained a festival in Monterosso (the poet's home) all for itself and for its bright flavours and colours, which allow the locals to create creams, limoncello and jams.

Honorable mention goes to the “muretti a secco”, dry stone walls, which fight every day against abandonment and thanks to monumental recovery projects are increasingly kept under the care of the institutions. It is estimated that this ancient art has given life to about 7000 kilometers of masonry, almost like the Great Wall of China. On these walls that now represent an art preserved above all by old farmers, ca-



"Muretto a secco"

pers and wild flowers grow which constitute part of the colors of the Riviera.

The Cinque Terre every year attract millions of tourists ready to be enchanted by the wonders of the villages, so beautiful that many times the villages have been the backdrop not only for literary compositions, but also for paintings, photos and even animated films, as in the case of Luca, a Pixar film.



Luca, Pixar

Resources & References;

<https://www.parconazionale5terre.it/pdf/Cinque.Terre.pdf>

<https://www.parconazionale5terre.it/index.php>

<https://www.cinqueterre.eu.com/it/>

<https://www.italia.it/it/liguria/cosa-fare/cinque-terre>

Le Cinque Terre e il Golfo dei poeti paesaggi sospesi sul mare,
Salvatore Marchese, 2002, Slow Food

Photos:

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fterremarine.it%2Fblog-cinque-terre%2Fquali-sono-i-piatti-tipici-delle-cinque-terre%2F&psig=AOvVaw08h7F8uiQBh4jEBo8ECVuw&ust=1733153578856000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBcQjhqxqFwoTCOC4tLLyhooDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAj>

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.tripadvisor.it%2FAttraction_Review-g187820-d1998103-Reviews-Sentiero_Monterosso_Vernazza-Monterosso_al_Mare_Cinque_Terre_Italian_Riviera_Ligu.html&psig=AOvVaw1Ai9tRCyWVZ-zmn31oSB81&ust=1733152492742000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBcQjhqxqFwoTCNDN2KfuhooDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fterredelmagra.com%2Fmanarola%2F&psig=AOvVaw0JvKnloQLMtk-t3bK6FYu9&ust=1733152584354000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBcQjhqxqFwoTCMj4ktHuhooDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAj>

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.visitspezia.it%2Fit%2Fscopri-i-dintorni-della-spezia%2Fpoi.html%3Fxunid%3D62473%3Acinque-terre-vernazza&psig=AOvVaw340kv4WA0IiSC9l32dU6he&ust=1733152637434000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBcQjhqxqFwoTCKiigOvuhooDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAR>

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.parconazionale5terre.it%2Fpun_dettaglio.php%3Fid_pun%3D1808&psig=AOvVaw2FCc-fOdZ5pgslU6KjKiD4&ust=1733152707635000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBcQjhqxqFwoTCMjjojYzvhooDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAR

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fterredel>

magra.com%2Fcorniglia%2F&psig=AOvVaw11TbJEXBnE-v5axQoijsHs&ust=1733152760213000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBcQjhxxqFwoTCLjA3KXvhooDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAJ

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.tripadvisor.it%2FAttractionProductReview-g187823-d27933891-Whale_Watching_Genoa_Cetacean_Sanctuary-Genoa_Italian_Riviera_Liguria.html&psig=AOvVaw20mX2OJkGP2TyIO8EECQD9&ust=1733152805547000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBcQjhxxqFwoTCNjtwrrvhooDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAK

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.parconazionale5terre.it%2Fdettaglio.php%3Fid%3D45903&psig=AOvVaw02569PbILaIRme8xBs-L8W&ust=1733153187079000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBcQjhxxqFwoTCPiT3fPwhooDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAJ>

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.spietati.it%2Fluca%2F&psig=AOvVaw3vO3Gbj_KSb0fzCMeksAUW&ust=1733153233764000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBcQjhxxqFwoTCOid5azxhooDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE

Laura Di Cuffa is a student of Asian and African languages and cultures at the University of Naples L'Orientale. She enjoys and has a great passion for travel and discovering the world in all its nuances.

Ao Dai – Vietnam’s Traditional Attire: Legacy of Silk Roads Trade



**Dr. Lê Thị Ngọc Diệp &
Dr. Trần Cao Bội Ngọc**

Introduction

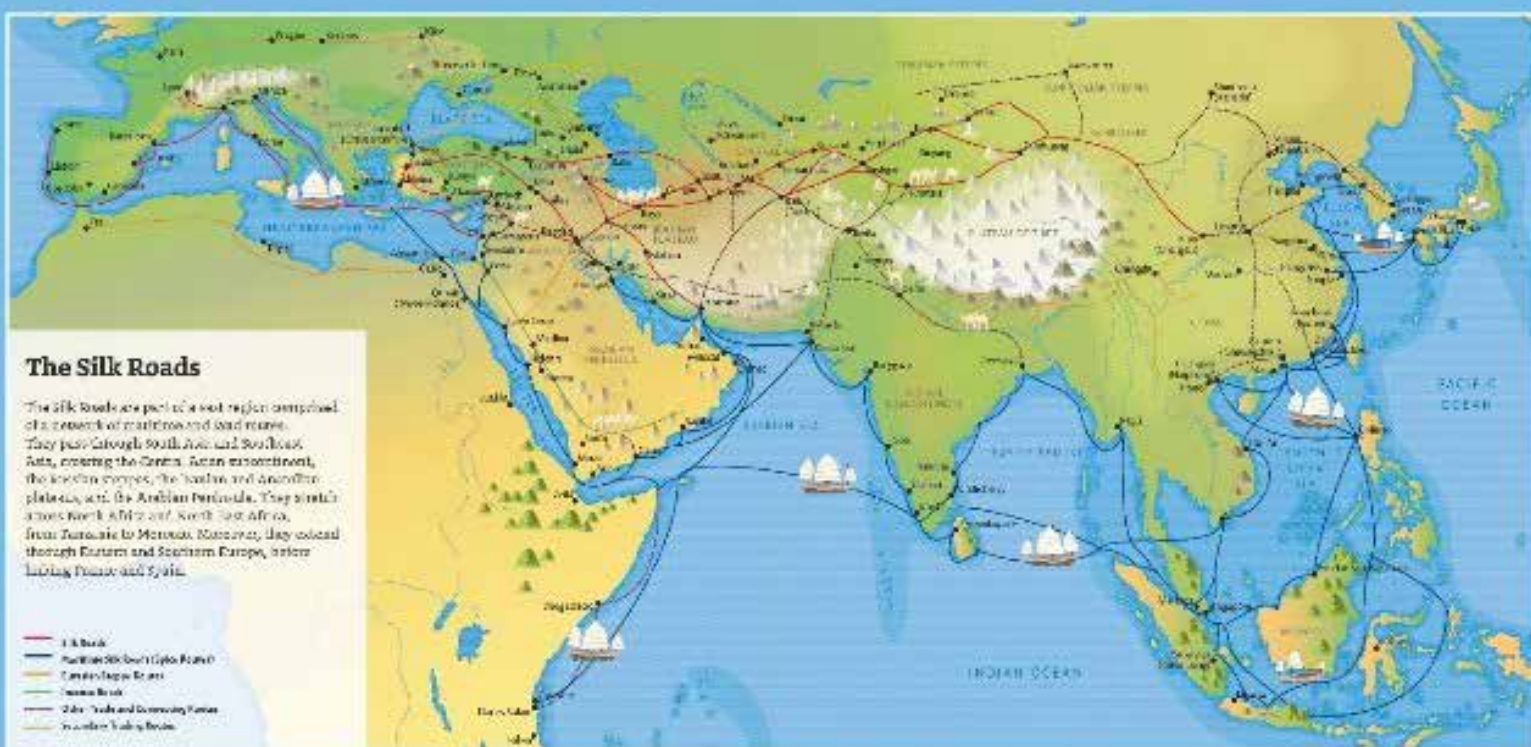
The Ao Dai, Vietnam’s iconic traditional outfit, symbolizes elegance, national pride, and cultural heritage. Its design reflects centuries of cultural exchange, rooted in the vibrant Silk Roads trade. This interaction introduced luxurious silk and artistic influences that shaped the Ao Dai’s unique patterns and styles. Silk weaving and embroidery techniques played a pivotal role in Vietnam’s textile traditions, leaving a

lasting mark on the Ao Dai. Today, it stands as a timeless representation of Vietnam's cultural identity and history.

Vietnam and the Silk Roads

Formally created in 130 BCE during the Han Dynasty (漢朝) of China, the Silk Roads were a system of ancient trade routes that connected the various parts of the ancient world in commerce between 130 BCE and 1453 CE (UNESCO, About the Silk Roads). Apart from its economic importance, it acted as a cultural and technological link, promoting the dissemination of ideas, products, and customs. One segment of the Silk Roads passed through Southeast Asia as illustrated in the map below.

The Silk Roads (UNESCO. About the Silk Roads)



Vietnam has stood as a key trading hub along the Silk Roads since the year 1500, linking the rest of Asia together through its strategic location and rich cultural exchanges. Positioned along the southern and maritime Silk Roads, Vietnam facilitated trade and interactions with China, India, Persia, and beyond. Its diverse geography consisting of mountains, plains, and coastline supported early trade and integration, and the Central Coast became a vital transit point for goods and culture. Since the 2nd millennium BCE, Vietnam's connections with South Asian and the Austronesian groups fostered unique cultural exchanges, exemplified by artifacts like the Dong Son bronze drum. Major trade items, including silk, spices, ceramics, and precious metals, strengthened ties with China and other markets. The Red River and Mekong deltas, alongside the East Sea, further solidified Vietnam's role as a bridge between the continent and the sea, attracting traders from the Middle East, Japan, and India. In this light, Vietnam was an integral part of the Silk Roads, acting as an economic and cultural bridge between

the major civilizations of Asia. Vietnam has actively participated and contributed to transcontinental and maritime connectivity throughout history (Wheeler).

Vietnamese Silk Fabrics and the Silk Roads

Silk production began in China in the first millennium BCE, leading to the creation of the first Silk Roads. By the first centuries BCE, trade networks reached Vietnam, where silk was produced in Giao Chi. Historical records confirm strong trade links, with many villages near the Red River named “Dâu,” (signifying mulberry trees for silkworm farming). “By the 10th century, a second south-bound Silk Roads had been established, with links to Vietnam” (UNESCO, The Silk Route and Viet Nam). Silkworm breeding and silk reeling were introduced into Co Do Village, Ba Vi, then flourished across Vietnam, from fertile plains to highland regions, forming enduring silk villages such as the famous Van Phuc village. Over time, silk has become a premium fabric of Vietnam, carrying profound national significance (Desilk, 2021).



Co Do village communal house, the origin of the folk poetry
“This silk is truly Co Do silk – the genuine tribute silk that ladies
love to use” (Desilk)

In Quang Nam, people know how to weave cloth, silk, satin, etc. This weaving technique is by no means inferior to that of China’s Guangdong people (Le, Q. Đ.). The Champa Kingdom, located in central Vietnam, significantly contributed to sericulture and the Silk Roads’ southern trade routes. Champa’s silk production, praised by Marco Polo during his 14th-century visit, was renowned for its quality, and its lively textile trade was well-documented. Champa artisans excelled in silk weaving and dyeing, influencing textile techniques in northern Vietnam. Its coastal location facilitated the exchange of goods and ideas, establishing Champa as a key hub in the Silk Roads network. From the begin-

ning of the 17th century, textiles were extremely expensive. Cochinchina produced a lot of silk, bringing luxury to Cochinchina people's costumes. Priest Cristoforo Borri (Italian) resided in Hoi An in 1618. He stated in his book, "As for everything related to daily life, Cochinchina was also very abundant. First of all, clothes, they had so much silk that the working people and the poor also used it every day" (Borri, 13) and "Cochinchina people not only had enough for themselves but also sold silk to Japan and to the kingdom of Laos, and from there silk was shipped to Tibet. This type of silk was more durable and stronger than Chinese silk." (Borri, 25). Hoi An had become a famous port in the maritime Silk Roads system in Asia, making many important contributions to the sea trade route from the beginning of the 16th century to the end of the 18th century. Merchants from many countries knew this land as a land of rich products, especially silk.

The Development Path of the Ao Dai

The modern Ao Dai took shape during the Nguyen Dynasty (1802–1945), a period of

cultural integration and identity-building. Silk was used to make Ao Dai due to its soft texture, sheen, and breathability. It perfectly suited Vietnam's tropical climate and gave the Ao Dai a luxurious, graceful appearance. Wearing a silk Ao Dai reflected tradition, craftsmanship, and national

Ao Dai Thai Tuan Group



pride, embodying beauty and sophistication.

Women's Ao Dai became symbols of elegance, featuring tailored bodices, flowing skirts, and intricate embroidery with floral and mythical motifs, symbolizing prosperity and harmony. Men's Ao Dai, while simpler, conveyed dignity and authority, reflecting their roles in governance. By regulating court attire, the Nguyen Dynasty elevated the Ao Dai as a cornerstone of Vietnam's cultural and national identity.

The 20th century was a pivotal moment in the evolution of the Ao Dai. "Painter Le Pho and Nguyễn Cát Tường were the most influential in regard to creation of the modern ao dai. Nguyen Cat Tuong (aka Le Mur, the wall) and his associates in Ha Noi created the first modern version of the ao dai in 1930, called the ao dai Le Mur" (Howard). Cat Tuong revolutionized the Ao Dai by blending Western tailoring with traditional designs, introducing snugger fits, elevated necklines, and modern styles, making it more practical for daily wear. These innovations preserved the Ao Dai's cultural significance while adapting it to a

changing society. The Doi Moi reforms of the late 1980s sparked a resurgence in its popularity, with modern versions now featuring diverse fabrics, colors, and designs to suit both traditional and contemporary tastes.

The Ao Dai holds importance that goes beyond the borders of Vietnam. Its participation in global cultural events and fashion exhibitions underscores its significance as a representation of Vietnamese heritage. By presenting Ao Dai on international platforms, Vietnam not only honors its heritage but also promotes cross-cultural appreciation and understanding, strengthening its identity as a country founded on tradition while embracing innovation.

Conclusion

The Silk Roads profoundly shaped the Ao Dai's materials and artistic heritage, introducing silk as a cornerstone of Vietnam's textile industry. Valued for its smooth texture, vibrant dye absorption, and lightweight nature, silk became ideal for creating elegant garments. Decorative techniques like tie-dyeing, block printing,

and embroidery, originating from Persia and India, were adapted by Vietnamese artisans with local motifs, such as lotus blossoms for purity and mythical creatures like dragons and phoenixes reflecting Vietnamese folklore (UNESCO; China National Silk Museum). Sericulture and textile villages preserved these influences, embedding Silk Roads artistry into the Ao Dai's legacy. Modern designers honor this tradition by blending classic patterns, silk, and embroidery with contemporary designs.

The Ao Dai symbolizes Vietnam's cultural evolution, showcasing the enduring impact of Silk Roads exchanges and regional creativity. It remains a proud emblem of national identity and resilience, reflecting Vietnamese ingenuity in a globalized world. As World Silk Union Secretary General Fei Jianming stated in honoring this legendary quintessential attire: "Vietnam's silk industry has the best foundation among Southeast Asian nations with its thousand-year-old craft villages" (Eco-silky).

References

Borri, C. (e-book). Xứ Đàng Trong năm 1621, dịch giả: Nguyễn Khắc Xuyên, Nguyễn Nghi, tr. 13 (Cochinchina in 1621, translated by Nguyen Khac Xuyen, Nguyen Nghi, p.13). <https://thuviensach.vn>

Borri, C. (2014, 1st edi. e-book). Relazione della nuova missione delli PP. della Compagnia di Giesù al Regno della Cocincina, p.25. www.liberliber.it

Câu Lạc Bộ Đình Làng Việt. (2024). Áo dài truyền thống – hành trình trở lại. NXB Thế Giới (translated as Đình Làng Việt Club. (2024). Traditional Ao Dai – the Journey back. World Publishing House).

Desilk. (2021). Những sợi tơ đã làm nên con đường tơ lụa huyền thoại như thế nào? (translated as “How did silk threads create the legendary silk road?” <https://desilk.com.vn/nhung-soi-to-da-lam-nen-con-duong-to-lua-huyen-thoi-nhu-the-nao>

Ecosilky. (2021). Thousand Years of Vietnamese Silk – The Identity of East Asian Ethnic. <https://ecosilky.com.vn/en/thousand-years-of-vietnamese-silk-the-identity-of-east-asian-ethnic/>

Howard, M. C. (2016). Textiles and Clothing of Vietnam: A History. McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.

Le, Q. Đ. (1959). Phủ biên tạp lục (撫邊雜錄), original text in Classical Chinese, translated by Ngô Lập Chí, p. 143

Thai Tuan Group Joint Stock Company. (2018). Con đường tơ lụa trở thành nguồn cảm hứng thiết kế áo dài (translated as “The Silk Road became a source of inspiration for ao dai design”). <https://eva.vn/thoi-trang/con-duong-to-lua-tro-thanh-nguon-cam-hung-thiet-ke-ao-dai-c36a344191.html>

UNESCO & China National Silk Museum. (2022). Textiles and Clothing along the Silk Roads. UNESCO Publishing. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382993.locale=en>

UNESCO. About the Silk Roads. Retrieved on December 2024 from <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/about-silk-roads>

UNESCO. The Silk Route and Viet Nam. Retrieved on December 2024 from <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/knowledge-bank/silk-route-and-viet-nam>

Vietnam Tourism. Vietnam's ancient Champa Kingdom. Retrieved on December 2024 from <https://vietnam.travel/things-to-do/vietnams-cham-legacy>

Vu, H.P. (1991). The Silk Route and Viet Nam. International Seminar for UNESCO Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue: "Manila as an entrepot in the trans-pacific commerce", Manila, The Philippines. <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/knowledge-bank/silk-route-and-viet-nam>

Wheeler, C. (2005). Silk Roads into Vietnamese History. In Education about Asia, Vol.10, no.3.

Assc. Prof. Dr. Le Thi Ngoc Diep is a senior lecturer from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNUHCM with a master's degree and a doctoral degree in Cultural Studies, and a bachelor degree in Library and Information Science. She was conferred the title of Associate Professor in Cultural Studies as well. She has authored and co-authored innumerable textbooks, book chapters, and research papers. Actively involved in research, curriculum development, and student supervision, she has had many chances to present her works at international conferences and do the reviewing for academic journals. In 2022, she was invited to teach specialized topics at the University of Complutense, Spain for a week.

Dr. Tran Cao Boi Ngoc is a senior lecturer from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNUHCM with a doctoral degree in Ethnography, a master's degree in Cultural Studies, a master's degree in the English language and a bachelor degree in Business Administration. She has authored and co-authored numerous textbooks, book chapters, and research papers, including 27 national English textbooks for primary and secondary schools. Actively involved in research, curriculum development, and student supervision, she has had many

chances to present her works at international conferences and do the reviewing for academic journals. In 2022, she was invited to teach specialized topics at the University of Complutense, Spain for a week.

Doina, Breath of Romania



Hyeong-hoo Kim

The Doina, meaning “folk song,” is a Romanian musical style, possibly with Middle Eastern roots, customary in Romanian peasant music, as well as in Lăutărească (Mahajan). It often features solo performances, either vocal or instrumental, and serves as a medium for expressing deep emotions such as longing, sorrow, or joy. Doina is closely tied to Romania’s pastoral and rural heritage, Doina reflects the lives of shepherds, peasants, and other

rural communities. The Doina can be performed in a variety of settings – outdoors, at home, at work, or during morning waking hours – and can always be performed solo, with or without instrumental accompaniment. The accompanying instruments can include traditional instruments like the straight flute, bagpipes, or even improvised instruments; its structure and style also vary by region. Doina has a broad palette of expressions and themes that encompass joy, sadness, solitude, social conflict, love, and even stories of predatory attacks. Doina varies depending on the creator or singer, expressing personal quali-



Historical photo of Romanian people performing Doina

Cântec ciobănesc/YouTube

ties, emotions, and moods. It also plays an important social role in Romania by providing a cathartic outlet that strengthens communal bonds. Historically, Doina is believed to have Persian roots and has influenced other musical traditions, including klezmer music (Mahajan). “Bela Bartok was the first to bring the Doina to the attention of the West, having discovered it in Northern Transylvania in 1912. Later in his travels he found similar genres in Ukraine, Algeria, Albania, the Middle East, and northern India” (Buskirk).

Etymology

The origin of the word ‘Doina’ is unknown. Speculation about the etymology of the word Doina notes, first of all, a similar form of music “Daina” (meaning “folk song”) found in Latvia and Lithuania, raising the possibility that the word is an older Indo-European term. Furthermore, “another possible derivation is from the Serbian word ‘daljina,’ meaning ‘furthering’, because most Doinas are about the feeling of ‘dor’ – a Romanian word meaning ‘intensely missing’” (Buskirk). It is also important

to note that the etymology of the Doina is a widely circulated, yet unverified, oral hypothesis.

Doina's Present and Past

Until the early 20th century in Romania, the Doina was “the most common type of peasant song (and in some areas the only type),” but today it is disappearing from peasant life (Doina, 2014). This pattern has occurred across many folk music genres, and is a legacy of the communist era. During the communist era, a new style of popular music emerged, “bringing with it a new style of musical genre that diluted and detracted from the peasant styles” (Doina, 2014). However, the Doina is “still common in the Lăutari repertoire of the

Traditional Doina performed in farming UNESCO





Orchestra Doina Maramureşului [YouTube](#)

Ardeal and Banat regions” (Doina, 2014).

Hope for Doina

Doina is still preserved in specific regions of Romania, each with unique styles and characteristics reflecting the local culture and environment. Key areas where Doina traditions remain strong include:

1. Maramureş and Oaş: Known for styles like “Horea cu noduri” and “Hora lungă,” these regions emphasize elaborate vocal techniques.
2. Moldova (Northern Moldova and Vrancea): Features themes of longing and melancholy with styles such as “Doina de jale.”
3. Oltenia and Southern Carpathians (Mehedinţi, Gorj, Vâlcea): Includes

styles like “Ca pe coastă” and “De luncă,” often performed in outdoor settings.

4. Banat and Ardeal: Instrumental Doinas are more common here, played on traditional instruments like the violin or pan-pipe.
5. Lăpuș, Năsăud, and Dolj: Regions that maintain the oral tradition of improvisation and emotional expression through Doina.

These regional styles highlight Doina as a deeply personal and expressive musical form, celebrated for its improvisational nature and its role in conveying the performer's emotions and connection to their surroundings. Despite its diminishing presence in daily rural life, Doina remains a cherished element of Romania's cultural heritage and is recognized by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Doina is a vital part of Romania's cultural heritage, embodying the nation's emotions, history, and traditions. Its improvisational and expressive nature makes it an

irreplaceable art form, celebrated for its unique lyrical and musical qualities. Recognized globally by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage, Doina highlights Romania's rich regional diversity while serving as a bridge between past and future generations, ensuring the continuity of its cultural legacy.

Reference

Buskirk, Don (n.d.). "Doina – Romanian Blues," Folkdance Footnotes: Beyond Choreography, <https://folkdancefootnotes.org/music/2-genres/doina-romanian-blues/>

"Doina" (20 April 2014). In Search of the Doina: Eastern European Musings, <https://insearchofthedoina.wordpress.com/>

"Doina" (n.d.), UNESCO - Intangible Cultural Heritage, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/doina-00192>

Mahajan, Girish (1 Oct 2024). "Doina," Alchetron, <https://alchetron.com/Doina>

Ion Serban (2008)

Hyeong-hoo Kim is a student of the Department of Romanian at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Korea.

Gawai Dayak Festival in Malaysia: A Celebration of Identity and Cultural Preservation



Patricia Nora Riget



Gregory Kiyai



Iban women with the Ngepan Iban

Gawai Dayak, also known as Hari Gawai, is a traditional harvest festival celebrated by the Dayak ethnic groups, particularly the Ibans and Bidayuh, who live primarily in the Malaysian state of Sarawak and in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Essentially, Gawai means festival and Dayak is a collective name for the indigenous peoples of Sarawak and Indonesian Kalimantan. Originally marking the end of the rice harvesting season, Gawai has grown over the years into a celebration that encompasses much more than an agricultural event. It is a spiritual, cultural, and social occasion that helps the Dayak people reconnect with their roots, their ancestors, and the natural world around them. At its core, Gawai is an expression of gratitude and a way for the community to come together, honour their traditions, and ensure the continuity of their cultural identity for future generations.

For the Dayak people, Gawai Dayak is not just a harvest festival; it is a pivotal moment to celebrate life, survival, and the profound connection between the people and the land. Rice, as the staple food of the

Dayak, is more than just sustenance—it is seen as a gift from the gods, an offering from nature that needs to be honoured. The festival marks the end of the planting and harvesting cycle, a time to give thanks for the abundance the earth has provided, and to pray for continued blessings in the years to come. But beyond that, it is a celebration of the people's bond with the environment, their ancestors, and the spirits that guide them.

Gazetted as a public holiday and celebrated yearly on 1 June, Gawai Dayak is both a religious and cultural festival. For the Ibans, for example, it is a time to seek blessings from their gods (Sempulang Gana) and ask for protection and guidance, while also celebrating the community's collective strength. In a world that is increasingly influenced by modern technology, urbanisation, and global culture, Gawai Dayak stands as a reminder of the Iban roots and their resilience in preserving their traditional ways of life.

At the heart of Gawai is a deep spiritual connection with nature. For those who still hold animistic beliefs - Pengarap Lama,



Bidayuh elder in traditional Bidayuh costume

where everything in the natural world—be it the trees, rivers, animals, or land—is believed to possess a spirit – Antu, Gawai is a time to honour these spirits, thanking them for their protection, abundance, and fertility. It is a reminder that the harvest is not just the result of human labour but also a gift from the divine forces that govern the earth. The celebration often begins in the longhouse, the traditional communal home of the Dayak. The festival starts

with the miring ceremony, where offerings are made to the gods and spirits. These offerings, which include rice, fruits, and other food items, are meant to express gratitude for the bountiful harvest and to ensure that the land remains fertile in the years to come. Elders and spiritual leaders, known as “Lembambang” or “Tuai Burung” conduct prayers and rituals, invoking the spirits and gods, seeking blessings for the community’s prosperity and well-being.

But Gawai is not just about the harvest; it is also about honouring the ancestors. The Iban believe that their ancestors’ spirits continue to watch over and guide them, and their presence is felt during the festival. Special prayers and offerings are made to the deceased, acknowledging their role in shaping the community’s past and ensuring its future. In this way, Gawai is a moment to connect with both the divine and the past, reinforcing the cyclical nature of life, death, and rebirth.

One of the most striking aspects of Gawai Dayak is the rich cultural expressions that fill the celebration — art, mu-



Ngajat Iban in longhouse

music, dance, and traditional attire - Ngepan Iban. These elements are not just for entertainment; they are steeped in meaning and significance. The clothing worn during the festival, for example, is not just for show; it is carefully designed with intricate beadwork, woven patterns, and bright colours, each representing the wearer's social sta-

tus, lineage, and spiritual beliefs. The attire connects the present-day Iban people to their ancestors and traditions, making them visible symbols of identity and heritage. Traditional dances are also an important part of Gawai, with the community gathering to perform dances that have been passed down for generations. These dances - Ngajat Iban are not only a form of celebration but a way of honouring the gods and spirits, each movement carrying its own meaning and significance. The rhythms of the “taboh” (a traditional stringed instrument) and “gong” add to the

Miring ceremony



spiritual atmosphere, providing a connection between the people and the divine. The songs - leka main sung during the festival tell stories of the community's history, struggles, and victories, serving as an oral tradition that keeps their culture alive.

Decorations within the longhouse are just as meaningful. They are adorned with symbolic motifs, intricate carvings, and vibrant tapestries that represent the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual worlds. These decorations are not just for beauty—they serve as reminders of the community's values, beliefs, and the spirits that guide them. Through these artistic expressions, the Iban ensure that their cultural identity is preserved and passed down to future generations.

Preparations for the auspicious celebration usually start about a month in advance, with the older generation brewing tuak, commonly known as rice wine. Popular traditional sweet delicacies such as penyaram—a snack sweetened with palm sugar, kuih cuan—a Malaysian version of honeycomb cookies, and kuih sarang semut—a delicacy that resembles an

ant nest—are often prepared by the ladies. Meanwhile, meat braised in soy sauce, ngelulun asi pulut—glutinous rice roasted in bamboo, and manuk pansuh—chicken cooked in bamboo—are popular savoury dishes. Guests partaking in a custom known as Ngabang (a tradition where the Dayaks open their homes to visitors) are usually served these traditional drinks and delicacies.

Whether celebrated in rural longhouses or urban centers, the festival brings together people from all walks of life, strengthening community bonds and reinforcing the importance of collective identity. In recent years, the festival has also become a way for the Dayak community to share their culture with others. In urban areas, Gawai may be celebrated in public festivals or gatherings, but it still carries the same spiritual weight and cultural significance as it does in the rural longhouses. In this way, Gawai Dayak is not just a celebration of the harvest or a time of thanksgiving—it is an act of cultural resistance and preservation. It is a powerful statement that the Dayak people's identi-

ty, history, and traditions will continue to thrive, no matter the challenges posed by modernisation. By celebrating Gawai, the Dayak people ensure that their cultural heritage is passed on, keeping it alive and vibrant for future generations.

Patricia Nora Riget is an Associate Professor at the Department of Asian and European Languages, Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, Universiti Malaya. She is a member of the Bidayuh ethnic group from Sarawak in East Malaysia. Her research interests are in the areas of the didactics of foreign languages, language education and ethnolinguistics of the indigenous languages of Sarawak as well as the internationalization of higher education institutions.

Gregory Anak Kiyai @ Keai is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Malaya. He has a strong academic background in Arts Management, Cultural Anthropology, Art Studies, and Cultural Studies. His expertise encompasses visual arts, material culture, ethnic studies, history, archaeology, and museum studies, with a particular focus on traditional culture and indigenous communities.

SUN NEWS

The 9th General Assembly of SUN & the 8th Annual International Conference of IASS

The 9th General Assembly of SUN was held successfully last November with about 120 representatives from 30 member universities participating. The event, held in Naples, was co-hosted by University of Naples L'Orientale and Canadian University Dubai.



This year's events lasted four days under the theme of 'Toward a Stronger and More Effective Research Collaboration among Member Universities of SUN'. Four days conference started on November 11th with receiving and welcoming participants where there were about 24 heads of member universities and about 30 students. In addition, three universities in Algeria also joined the event for the first time and later they also expressed interest in becoming members of SUN.

During this year's General Assembly, one of the significant points was holding the 8th Annual International Academic Conference where scholars from diverse backgrounds gathered to share their studies, findings emphasizing the Silk Roads and World History Civilizations - heroes, conquerors, and adventures.

Also appointing a new Secretary - General to the USSUN (United Students of SUN) was another significant milestone. Elia Emanuele PIZZATO from CaFoscari University Venice appointed as the leading figure for the student body of SUN.

The gathering concluded as the SUN announced the venue of 10th General Assembly as Samarkand, Uzbekistan.



Secretary General of SUN and the representatives of the WeGO greetings after signing the MOU

SUN Signs MOU with the World Smart Sustainable Cities Organisation (WeGO)

WeGO participated in the 9th General Assembly of SUN in Naples, Italy, from 11 to 15 November, 2024. In this gathering, SUN and WeGO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) making a significant milestone for the SUN as well as member universities. The aim of this partnership is to collaborate in enhancing youth education in smart and sustainable cities, empower young leaders to work for greener and smart cities.

The MoU signing moment also emphasized the pivotal possibility of promoting youth engagement in urban sustainability and also providing students of SUN to participate in the

WeGO Smart City Champions Program where students can develop their creative initiative to turn ongoing urbanization into an environmentally friendly movement.

According to WeGO, many member universities showed interest in collaborating with WeGO projects and expanded networks with universities and cities in diverse locations along the Silk Roads.

Photo Contest of SUN

Photo Contest of SUN (PHOCOS) is one of the most interesting activities that share the beauty of diversity through participants' lenses. This year photo contest opened under the theme of 'Leisure And Play'

This year PHOCOS received 64 works from 24 participants from 16 different member

Winners of the both photos and writing contests of SUN



universities including Università degli Studi di Napoli Orientale, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Canadian University Dubai, National University of Mongolia. Most interestingly, this year students from non-member universities have also submitted applications and the grand prize was won by Mahdi, from Mohajer Technical and Vocational University, a non-member university of SUN. This also proves that SUN plays its role as a vehicle platform for students around the world in diverse ways.

Writing Contest of SUN

SUN successfully concluded the Writing Contest of SUN (WRICOS) under the theme of Trees. As there are two sections of WRICOS, one for essays and one for poems, the poem section received work under the theme 'Trees' while the essay section opened for two themes; 1. Trees and People along the Silk Roads, and 2. How is contemporary climate change affecting the physical landscapes and environments along the Silk Roads?

Through WRICOS, SUN aims to promote the beauty and values of linguistic diversity while opening doors for young talented writers to share their works among member universities. The WRICOS 2023-2024 has



Ms. Byambasuren Erdenebayar, the Grand Prize winner for the Essay

received about 51 works in 11 different languages from 18 member universities including Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, University of Malaya, Malaysia, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, University of Guilan, Iran, and Canadian University of Dubai, UAE. Among these works, 10 awardees for essays and 7 awardees for poems have been selected.

Under the essay section, Byambasuren Erdenebayar, from National University of Mongolia's work selected for the Grand Prize while Mustafa Kurnaz, from Ankara University, Latife Sakhi, from Allameh Tabatabai University works selected for the excellence awards. On the other hand, Ilma Ahmad, from Canadian University Dubai won the grand

prize for the poem and Pinsari Jayasundara, from University of Kelaniya, Dashdulam Batbold, from Mongolian National University of Arts and Culture were the 2 recipients of excellence award.

USSUN NEWS

USSUN is the association consisting of student representatives of member universities of SUN. It serves as a generator of new dreams and ambitions, keeping SUN young and lively. Recognizing and acknowledging the beauty of diversity as the reason to celebrate, students aim to pursue peace and prosperity through mutual understanding, spreading the harmony to the future, and exchanging the intellectual, religious and cultural ideas.

They are engaged in various types of projects (either individual or group) for restoring the historical and cultural values of the Silk-Roads and their own countries. Students are also involved in volunteer work such as providing assistance and relief work in disaster affected regions, using their individual knowledge, talents, and skills.

USSUN Workshop Highlights at the 9th General Assembly in Naples, Italy

The 9th General Assembly of the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) was successfully held at the University of Naples “L’Orientale” in Naples, Italy, in 2024. Among the notable events was the USSUN (United Students of the Silk-Road Universities Network) workshop, which brought together passionate students from diverse nations for an enriching and multicultural experience.

2024 first OT

At our first meeting, the OT session, we had time to introduce the purpose and principles of SUN. The Silk Road University Network serves as a pivotal point in opening new paths of communication and cooperation, future creation, and peace and harmony through education, research, and the exchange of academia and culture related to the Silk Road. USSUN, an autonomous student organization under SUN, is an international organization within our university. In particular, the professor in charge gave a detailed explanation about the purpose and orientation of

USSUN, which allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of this activity. Additionally, we took time for each team—PF, RS, and PR—to introduce themselves, which helped us to understand the overall activities. It was a time filled with anticipation for our future activities.

During this USSUN workshop, a new USSUN leadership team was elected, marking a fresh chapter for the network's student body. The new appointees are as follows:

USSUN Advisor:

Professor Dorota Majewicz, currently serving as Deputy Chairman of the Social Sciences Department at the Sopot Scientific Society (SSA).

USSUN Secretary-General:

Pizzato Elia Emanuele, from Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy.

USSUN President:

Maria Pourlioti, from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

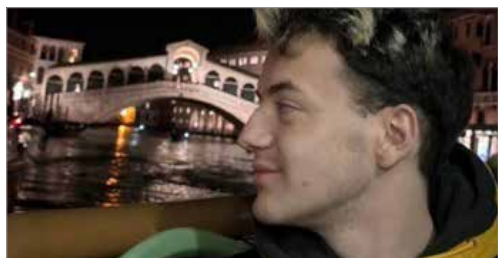
USSUN Vice President:

Mukhayyokhon Odilkhujaeva Rustam Kizi, from Uzbek State University of World Languages, Uzbekistan.

The workshop was a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and cultural exchange, further solidifying the bonds between students of SUN member universities. The newly elected leadership is expected to build on these efforts and guide the network to greater achievements.

Below, we share some of their thoughts and reflections from Pizzato Elia Emanuele and Mukhayyokhon Odilkhujaeva Rustam Kizi.

What is to be done? A Reflection on the United Students of the Silk-Road University Network



Elia Emanuele Pizzato

First of all, I wish to present myself to the dear reader and fellow student who is embarking in this sort of not too long monologue. I am Elia Emanuele Pizzato a master student of Chinese language and management at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice. As for now, I also represent the students of my university in the Academic Senate (the highest decisional body in our university) and I am currently the vice president of the Ca' Foscari Student Council,

and representative of Venetian students in the European university alliance Eutopia.

My first knowledge of the existence of the United Students of the Silk-Road university network (USSUN) has been a few months ago, when the Rector bestowed upon me the honour to represent the whole Ca' Foscari student community in such a broad and relevant international framework, and hence to be officially nominated as the Secretary General of the USSUN during the IX General Assembly in Naples.

From my part, now I am called to be the voice of the students from 81 universities spread all over Asia, Europe and America, in the same name of the Silk Road that seven centuries ago permitted Marco Polo, one of the most illustrious Venetian citizens, to bring together Europe and Asia. Quite frankly, to walk on the same path of Marco Polo is nowadays such an important responsibility, which I could not forecast even a few months ago, while first approaching the SUN. However, the aim of this whole network must be to connect students from the furthest areas and different cultures to build together strong international ties among the peoples.

In order to do so, I believe the USSUN should find an institutional role as the drive towards this goal of common internationalism among

the students of our universities, especially in times like ours, when mutual distrust, the resurgence of aggressive nationalism and winds of war are actively blowing on our heads. At the general assembly in Naples, there were only 10 universities represented on a student level, and there are no precise rules of the United Students role and internal procedures, such as the election of the president and vice president. This is an important point for any organisation that aims to achieve some sort of successful result: from the institutional point of view, we need at least a student representative from each of the universities. For the United Students to work properly it is fundamental to set up a proper code of procedures to follow, and spread this same code to all the interested people. For example, clarifying how the appointment of the General Secretary works, how the election of the presidency is set up, and who holds the right to vote and under which circumstance.

On the other hand, once the internal transparency and the largest representation of the students from all the 81 universities are reached, we could truly work on expanding the shared knowledge of the USSUN and its activities to the broad student public, as well as projecting future cultural and international activities to carry on among different

universities. Furthermore, an important point to achieve is undoubtedly the institution of a framework for student international exchange among the universities involved in the Silk-Road University Network, to enhance common understanding and cultural intercommunication.

As a consequence, I believe that we should be taking the example of the place where the USSUN is most active and most organised, namely the South Korean Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, to understand the actions to take. By setting up a deeper connection with the USSUN Secretariat, the HUFS experience can indeed teach us how a student association has been able to organise its own representative work of the USSUN inside the university and its student community, as well as being the backbone of the overall activities carried out by the USSUN itself.

A lot yet is to be done, and a lot yet is to be achieved together!

Elia Emanuele Pizzato is a Master's student specializing in Chinese Language and Management at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy.

A Reflection on the United Students of the Silk-Road University Network



Odilkhujaeva Mukhayyokhon

My name is Odilkhujaeva Mukhayyokhon. I am from Uzbekistan and I am 21 years old, study at Uzbekistan State World Languages University, on the third year of my bachelor's degree of Translation. It is really pleasure for me to share with you my feelings about 9th GA that has been held in Naples. First of all i would like to tell my story of participating in that brilliant event. Being honest, i didn't know about SUN and my university offered me to participate as a rappresentitive student of my university and i did some researches , and i got a lot of information, articles about SUN, then i tried to collect all of my documents to apply VISA of italy as a result witn invitation letter of SUN i could take it and i got a chance to visit Naples, Italy and be in that Assembly.

Reflections on the 9th GA and Future Goals

The 9th General Assembly was more than just a conference; it was a transformative

experience that has ignited a passion within me. The opportunity to connect with brilliant minds from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds was truly inspiring. I made a very big networking among talented and very smart students all over the world for instance, Turkey, Greece, South Korea, China etc. We still keep in touch nevertheless GA was finished already, it gave me friends, knowledge, cultural experience and i am so happy that next 10th GA will be held in UZBEKISTAN, in my country, it is great honor to welcome SUN and its talented students .I am incredibly grateful to have been a part of such a vibrant and intellectually stimulating event. One of the most significant highlights of the GA was my election as the Vice President of the United Students of SUN. This honor is not just a recognition of my individual efforts but also a testament to the collective spirit of the SUN community. I am humbled and excited to take on this role and contribute to the organization's growth and development.

As the Vice President, I aim to foster a stronger sense of unity and collaboration among students from different universities. As well as i am currently promoting and presenting SUN to students more detailed in my country and trying to give them passion and interest to join and participate in competitions that exist (writing, foto, poetry). I envision a future where

SUN becomes a platform for cross-cultural exchange, innovation, and social impact. By organizing various initiatives, such as virtual workshops, making more active social pages of USSUN, SUN for different universities all of the world because i am also doing my second ERASMUS in Europe, i will work with several universities, cultural exchange programs, and joint research projects, we can create a truly global network of young leaders. Moreover, I believe it is crucial to preserve and promote the rich history and heritage of the Silk Road. By delving into the works of renowned explorers like Marco Polo and studying ancient civilizations, we can gain valuable insights into the interconnectedness of different cultures and societies. Such knowledge can help us address contemporary global challenges and build a more peaceful and sustainable future. I am particularly interested in exploring the potential of technology to enhance intercultural understanding. By leveraging digital tools, we can connect with people from all over the world, break down language barriers, and facilitate the exchange of ideas. I hope to work with fellow students to develop innovative solutions that can address the pressing issues of our time. The 9th General Assembly has been a pivotal moment in my academic journey. It has broadened my horizons, inspired me to

dream big, and motivated me to make a positive impact on the world. I am excited to embark on this new chapter as the Vice President of USSUN, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to create a brighter future for all.

Odilkhujaeva Mukhayyokhon is a third-year undergraduate student specializing in Translation Studies at Uzbekistan State World Languages University, Uzbekistan.

Efforts to Realize the Spirit of 'Silk Roadia' : USSUN-HUFS's Achievements of the Second-Half 2024 Project



Min-ju Sung



Min-song Kim

'Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN)' has a vision to "serve the world" by working on a variety of projects that realize the values of the ancient Silk Road, which has been a source of immense pride. SUN's Identity is formed by the Silk Road's lesson that "cultural differences are a celebration of diversity, not discrimination," and its message of peaceful coexistence and shared prosperity through mutual exchange.

During the second-half of 2024, the USSUN-HUFS has made strides in realizing this "Silk Road Spirit" with two major projects under the concept of the "Security Council" and the "United Nations Environment Program" of the United Nations (UN). This article will take an in-depth look at the activities and details



of the those projects, showing how they have contributed to solve international issues.

The first project followed the concept of the “Security Council”, which has the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. For the project, we conducted a seminar to discuss the hurman rights issues arising from the Israel-Palestine war and seek solution for these problems. The main focus of this project was proposing both peaceful and practical solutions from the perspective of university students.

The seminar went through a process of deeply analyzing the background and current situation of the conflict, discussing the roles of various actors-governments, international organizations, corporations, and individuals - and completed our own Peace Statement on the Israel-Palestine war.

The statement was translated into eight languages (Korean, English, Japanese,



Peace Statement on the Israel-Palestine War

**by United Students of the Silk-Road University
Network's Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
(USSUN-HUFS)**

To: Leaders of Israel and Hamas, leaders of governments worldwide, the UN Secretary-General, international organizations, multinational corporations, and global citizens

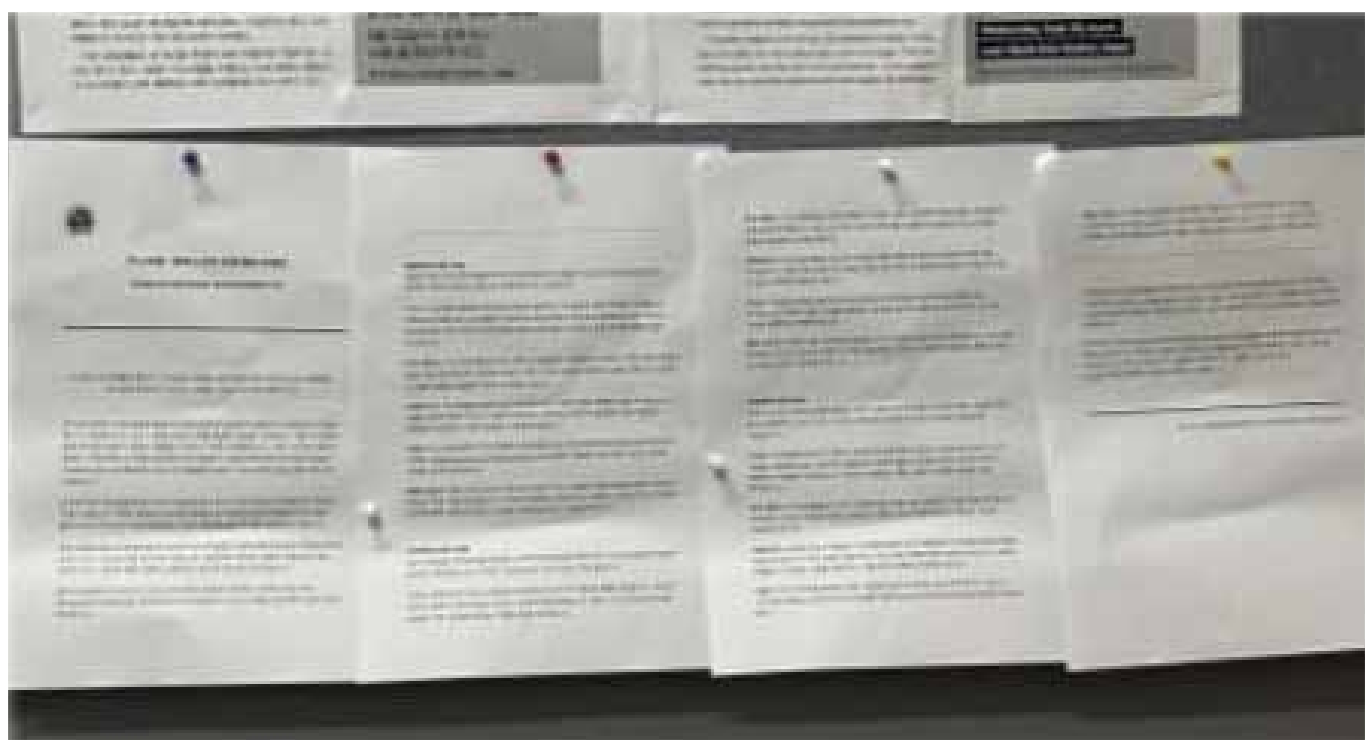
For approximately 75 years, the conflict between Israel and Palestine has been ongoing. Throughout history, humanity has sought to create a better society by defining human rights and forming agreements with other nations as an effort in order to bring about world peace. "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" This is Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

However, the recent Israel- Palestine war has reminded us that we are still living in an era of barbarism. In light of this, USSUN-HUFS, expresses deep concern regarding the human rights issues given rise from the Israel-Hamas war.

USSUN-HUFS is exploring the Silk Road, which holds the establishment of human civilization and moments of brilliant history. The lesson of Silk Road history is not the confusion of war, but the spirit of Silkroadia, where peace is realized through coexistence.

Therefore, as students who cherish and remember the brilliant civilization of the Silk Road and Silkroadia, we condemn this war and urge the following:

Chinese, Spanish, French, Russian, and Arabic) in collaboration with University Students Interpreters' Associations (USIA) and exchange students from various countries. The statement was sent to various institutions, including the Press of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS), Human Rights Center of HUFS, the Model United Nations of HUFS, Amnesty International Korea, and the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), Seoul



Secretariat.

The full versions of the peace statement are accessible through the link below:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ONLicII2ESZwMUXBO5vYdTHUN0HVw2VI/>

The second project followed the concept of the “United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)”, which focuses on addressing humanity’s pressing environmental challenges. In this regard, we especially addressed environmental issues occurring in the Silk





Road region. The project's aim was to raise awareness of environmental issues of this area and encourage participants to engage in practical environmental protection activities.

The project was specifically proceeded by conducting a participatory campaign, where participants learn about environmental issues occurring in the typical Silk Road countries through the game named "Istanble (Istanbul + Marble)." "Istanble" is a board game format that follows the basic rule of the game, 'Blue Marble', where people roll the dice and move



the markers to a certain city of the Silk Road. In this way, we broke the conventional format of the campaign by making students to read the major environmental problems and solve the quiz related to that, enabling them to actively participate in the campaign through games and quizzes. Also, the participants were able to share their creative ideas for the environmental protection of this region and the ways to realize sustainable, eco-friendly development.

The thing that made the campaign more special was the materials used for decorating the booth. The materials for the booth were all recycled, as we reused discarded boxes, cans, papers and other reusable materials, resulting in zero waste even after the campaign. By this movement, we raised the awareness of practising sustainable actions to reduce waste



and delivered the importance of environmental protection.

Additionally, eco-friendly companies, 'Haulshome', 'Gold Baby Rice', and 'Orton' had sponsored their eco-friendly products to our campaign. We used these products as a giveaway gift for participating the campaign, which intrigued the people's interest to participate in the event and spread out the usage of eco-friendly products in daily lives.

The campaign ended successfully, and it gave a first step for us to render the message of sustainable development and environmental awareness, deliver the importance of Silk Road, and to promote the activities and the core identities of USSUN-HUFS.

In addition to these two projects, USSUN-HUFS is planning a third activity, the "UNESCO" project. Based on the slogan of safeguarding



wold heritage through international cooperation in education, science, and culture, the project will be a “storybook creation” project for children from various Silk Road region countries. Based on the interviews with these children and exchanged students, the project will work to spread cultural values of Silk Road and provide valuable education opportunities for the multicultural children.

In the second half of 2024, USSUN-HUFS continued to take a practical approach to international issues based on the Silk Road spirit, and contributed to the realization of peace, environment, and cultural values within the Silk Road region through various projects. In the future, USSUN-HUFS will continue to rediscover the cultural and historical exchanges of the Silk Road region and strive to build a better world through them.

We believe that our passion to realize the spirit of Silk Road and promote international cooperation has served as a major step for peace and harmony.

Min-ju Sung is a Student of Persian and Iranian studies, Business department at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Korea.

Min-song Kim is a Student of English Literature & Culture, Language & Trade department at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Korea

NEWS FROM **MEMBER UNIVERSITIES**

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Signing of the Sat4Forest Project Agreement with the European Space Agency under the National Microsatellite Program

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki has signed an agreement with the European Space Agency (ESA) for the implementation of the program Sat4Forest, as of November 14, 2024, in collaboration with Hellenic Space Center (HSC).



The implementation of the project is part of Axis 3 of the National Microsatellite Program, funded by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan “Greece 2.0”.

The Sat4Forest project aims to enhance the sustainability of Greece’s forest ecosystems through the use of advanced Earth Observation satellite technologies. The project will design, develop, validate, and deliver a comprehensive Forest Monitoring Service for Greece, using a range of satellite remote sensing data from various sources, with a primary focus on utilizing very high-resolution data from the National Microsatellite Program. This program is an ambitious initiative by the Ministry of Digital Governance aimed at creating and using a modern microsatellite constellation for various national applications, implemented with the support of the Hellenic Space Center and the European Space Agency (ESA), and funded by the Recovery and Resilience Fund.

The Sat4Forest project consists of two main services: 1) Mapping forest types and forest fuel biomass, and 2) Forest and Natura 2000 site monitoring. The project will support informed decision-making in environmental and forest management, identifying potential threats to forested areas, recognizing four categories of risk: urbanization, deforestation, forest diseases, and pressures due to increased drought.

Research Program of the Department of Civil Engineering AUTH – CARE SEA: International Cooperation for the Protection of the Black Sea from Pollution

The research program CARE SEA – Cooperation and Awareness for Pollution-free and Environmentally Sustainable Black Sea, is currently in process by the Department of Civil Engineering AUTH. The purpose of this program is to foster environmental cooperation and raise awareness among stakeholders, institutions, and citizens about the mitigation and elimination of pollution in the broader Black Sea region.

On the Greek side, particular emphasis will be placed on managing plastics and microplastics that end up in the marine environment and protected areas. This will be addressed both through in-depth study and the development of a relevant model simulating the movement of microplastics in the aquatic environment. Additionally, to utilize the results of the research for the benefit of Greek society, informational campaigns will be organized, alongside the creation of a website where citizens can mark coastal and marine areas of plastic pollution on an online map. This information will be shared with relevant stakeholders so they can take action and initiate mitigation and collection efforts.

For more information about the project:

<https://bsu.edu.ge/sub-51/page/2-344/index.html>

AUTH Joins European Universities to Create the First MOOC on European Cohesion Policy

The Department of Journalism and Mass Media and the Department of Informatics AUTH, along with five other prestigious European universities, have created the first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on European Cohesion Policy, launched by the European Commission. The course aims to address gaps in journalism education and promote knowledge of Cohesion Policy and its multiple benefits for European regions and cities. It is designed for journalism students, professionals, and anyone interested in the subject.

The MOOC is a free, interactive online



learning platform available in all EU languages. It covers key areas such as EU governance, Cohesion Policy, available tools for finding data on the EU, cross-border collaborations, and research partnerships. The course is structured into 14 modules and spans an entire semester.

For more information about the course:
<https://cope.csd.auth.gr/>

Canadian University Dubai, UAE

Canadian University Dubai Fosters Global Partnerships to Advance Research Excellence in the UAE

Canadian University Dubai (CUD) is building on its reputation for academic excellence with a series of cutting-edge international collaborations that will deliver world-class research in specialized fields. These



multinational partnerships have been established to foster initiatives that can impact on a global scale, further boosting the reputation of the UAE as an emerging centre and a dynamic hub for innovative research excellence.

Leading on Sustainable Mobility

CUD's School of Engineering, Applied Science and Technology has hosted the prestigious Third International Conference on Sustainable Mobility Applications, Renewables, and Technology, bringing together global experts to share their insights and advancements in the field. Featuring keynotes from leading academics from Aalborg University, Denmark, University of Sheffield, UK, Zhejiang University, China, and the German Aerospace Center (DLR), Germany, the event explored a wide



spectrum of topics that will shape the future of sustainability, with emphasis on mobility, energy, and buildings. The papers presented addressed some of the emerging challenges in environmental preservation, including the development of a solar-aided drone designed to enhance forest fire surveillance. They also explored a range of pressing global security threats, from landmine detection to user authentication systems.

The university's student community is playing its own part in leading the way to advancing technology for sustainable transportation. A team of engineering students has created an innovative AI-powered management system to enhance the efficiency and safety of taxi services in Dubai. Known as SmartTranspo, the innovation won the prize for 'Best Implementation Champion' at the Alibaba Cloud/AI and RTA Hackathon 2024, staged at this year's GITEX Global. In addition to \$10,000 in Alibaba Cloud credit and a \$3,000 cash prize, the team has earned the opportunity to participate in next year's international hackathon in China.

In response to the growing demand for advanced skilled in emerging technologies, CUD recently launched a Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence (MScAI). Aligned with the World Economic Forum Future of Jobs

Report, which identifies AI as a key driver of job creation, the MScAI explores pioneering technologies associated with the discipline, including machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing, computer vision, robotics, data science, and optimization algorithms.

Tackling Health Inequalities

CUD's Department of Public Health has joined forces with the University of Oxford to establish the MENA division of The Global Health Network. The collaboration designates CUD as the regional hub for the Network's 'Artificial Intelligence for Global Health in Asia' project, which brings prominent academic institutions together with government and non-government entities to explore the potential application and responsible use of AI in public healthcare. The network involves strategic partners from 14 countries and has been established to facilitate research and knowledge exchange on public health issues specific to the MENA region.

Associate Professor, Dr. Malcolm Price, has joined a team of experts convened by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to tackle the leading global cause of maternal mortality. The project is part-funded by the Gates Foundation and will explore postpartum haemorrhage, in

order to improve prevention and treatment of the life-threatening condition.

As part of the university's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals around combatting climate change and overall environmental protection, two students from the Environmental Health Management Program were officially selected to attend and participate in the CoP29 Mock Conference held in Egypt. They simulated the roles of country delegates, chief negotiators, and non-state actors and discussed and voted on their research-based resolutions.

Building on the university's existing partnerships with global organizations aimed at reducing the worldwide deficit in healthcare workers, CUD has recently launched a Master of Public Health degree. Informed by leading academics from North America and regional practitioners in healthcare leadership, the curriculum covers the principal themes of public health, including epidemiology, biostatistics and occupational health and safety, and explores new dimensions of sector such as innovations in e-health.

Promoting International Collaboration in Design

CUD's School of Architecture and Interior Design has become a member of Cumulus, a

leading global association for art and design education and research. Membership of the association will open doors to international collaboration in teaching, research, student exchange programs, competitions, and awards. As the sole Cumulus member in the UAE, CUD is positioned on the global stage of art and design education, helping to boost the school's international recognition, reputation, and ranking. The membership connects CUD students to a vast network of over 350 universities worldwide, enabling them to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds and cultures, creating a richer learning experience.

Exchange programs with Cumulus member institutions will offer unique opportunities to study abroad, explore a new environment, and gain international experience. Cumulus also hosts student competitions and awards, allowing CUD students to participate in prestigious events to showcase their talent on a global platform. As a leader in art and design research, Cumulus fosters collaboration between member institutions that can create opportunities for CUD students to participate in research projects with international teams, gaining valuable experience and potentially co-authoring publications. This prestigious membership was formalized at the 2024

Cumulus Conference in Budapest, where CUD joined 25 other worldwide institutions admitted as new members of the association. With the addition of the UAE, Cumulus now has members representing 71 countries.

Chapman University, USA

Chapman Health Science Faculty, Students Make Global Connections: Physical Therapy faculty Share Expertise with Ukraine and Tajikistan

Chapman physical therapy faculty got involved this year with PT education in Ukraine, with the goal of developing resources for Tajikistan—which borders Afghanistan, China and other former Soviet republics.



Chapman faculty got involved through former faculty member Marcia Greenberg. Greenberg has worked for more than a decade with Momentum Wheels for Humanity, a nonprofit that works with people with disabilities around the world. Greenberg introduced a version of Chapman's stroke boot camp in El Salvador during her training of physical therapists. She developed teaching resources for PTs in Ukraine that have been ongoing since 2015. Part of Momentum's current project, which is funded by USAID, is to develop an entry-level physical therapy program in Tajikistan.

Greenberg told Prof. Allison McKenzie that one challenge in Tajikistan's PT education is a heavy reliance on lectures, even for hands-on clinical courses. "So I suggested that we show them how we do it at Chapman—i.e. integrating lab and 'lecture' so that students can learn to apply and practice what they are learning while getting feedback from faculty," says McKenzie, DPT, Ph.D.

She began working with Greenberg and Momentum to share videos of Chapman classes with Republican Medical College in Tajikistan. The material will augment training materials developed by World Physiotherapy to help create the equivalent to an associate's degree PT program, Greenberg says.

“The goal is to enhance PT education and practice in Eastern Europe, while the international educators learn more about the local culture and customs,” McKenzie says.

The Chapman material includes footage and practice management courses, where students learn to evaluate and treat different diagnoses. Once educators are trained, they can teach their peers and then students, McKenzie says.

Audio of the Chapman classes will be translated into Russian, which is spoken by most faculty Tajikistan, and Tajik, spoken by many younger people like students. She and her collaborators from World Physiotherapy hope this will form a framework on which the PT school in Tajikistan can build their own program.

“They’re pretty much starting from scratch there,” she says. “We want to tailor whatever we do to be appropriate for their culture.”

Greenberg says graduates of the program will be the “pioneers of the profession” in Tajikistan. Work on the program also dovetails with the World Health Organization’s Rehabilitation 2030 initiative, which supports incorporating rehab into the health care of all countries.

“With the support of Chapman, they can see where they’re headed,” Greenberg says. “It’s a really big help and we appreciate that

Department Chair Shawn Farrokhi and the whole faculty have been so supportive.”

University of Coimbra, Portugal

University of Coimbra Recognized for its Contribution to Sino-Portuguese Humanistic Exchanges

The University of Coimbra received the Prize for Contribution to Sino-Portuguese Humanistic Exchanges awarded by the Chinese Ambassador to Portugal, Zhao Bentang, at a ceremony held on 1 June 2024 at the Chinese Embassy in Lisbon.

On behalf of the University of Coimbra, the prize was received by the Director of the Sino-Lusophone Academy (ASL-UC), Professor Rui



de Figueiredo Marcos, and the Director of the Confucius Institute (ICUC), Professor Cristina Zhou.

University of Coimbra and GISU Alliance Host Week of Cultural and Academic Events

Between October 10 and 18, the University of Coimbra, in partnership with the Guangzhou International Sister City Universities Alliance (GISU), held a series of events under the International Language and Cultural Committee Project.

The program featured online seminars, an international symposium and a multicultural film cycle, strengthening cultural and academic ties among Portugal, China, and Portuguese-speaking countries.

On October 11, the International Symposium



“Building International Bridges” was held at Colégio da Trindade, in celebration the 5th anniversary of the Sino-Lusophone Academy of the University of Coimbra (ASL-UC), with an opening lecture given by the former President of the Republic of Cape Verde, Jorge Fonseca, a UC alumnus, with the theme ‘The flavours, places, knowledge and non-places of the Portuguese language’.

The event also marked the 500th anniversary of Luís Vaz de Camões, the 700th anniversary of Marco Polo’s death, and the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Portugal and China.

University of Donja Gorica (UDG), Montenegro

Introducing Innovative Model of Studies at UDG

University of Donja Gorica (UDG) develops a very unique model of education and has a very clear research orientation, as well as a strategic orientation towards the development of an entrepreneurial characteristic in its studies. The primary aim of studying at UDG (based on the study model according to “Professor’s equation” $S = z \cdot i^2$) is to enable student -



through acquiring knowledge and intensity of life during studies (where the latter, according to Professor's equation, is more important and enables conversion of knowledge gained into abilities) – to be able to follow the global processes in the world around him/her, to notice changes or change tendencies, as well as potential problems and conflicts that go together with these changes, and to be able to accept the responsibility of solving such problems, either through creating products and services in their own companies (during the educational process we put an emphasis on this) or as an “expert on uncertainty”, who will offer his/her expertise to employers on the global market. These very individuals, having those abilities and the character of a

researcher who sees changes and is ready to accept responsibility to manage such changes, are competitive on the global market.

UDG is an entrepreneurial innovative university whose model of studies is based on Rector's concept – Professor's equation- $S=z \cdot i^2$, by which the theoretical and philosophical character of studies at UDG is expressed. (Idea creator Prof. Veselin Vukotic)

The series of discussions and interactive trainings aimed at the professional development and professional development of the teaching staff's pedagogical competencies began. About 250 teachers and associates of the University of Donja Gorica were involved, who had the opportunity to learn from experienced professors from various fields in university pedagogy. They could further improve their professional competences on learning outcomes of teaching process, stimulating creative and critical thinking of students, developing rhetorical skills in teaching, discuss about further review of the curricula of UDG study programmes and innovations in teaching and new trends.

Further, on the initiative and the idea of the Rector of the University of Donja Gorica (UDG), the new initiative and idea has been continued with implementation – a project with young associate and teaching assistant with aim of

professional development and improving the quality of studies and teaching process at UDG – a new innovative project “1:1” for young associates. About 60 young associates were involved.

“Ideas and Character” Project at UDG – Winter Semester 2024/25

The project was founded in 2007 as a idea of our Rector, Prof. Dr Veselin Vukotic. The principle of the organization of this project is to form random groups of students, with students having no right to create and decide on group members. The groups consist of 6 members (students of different profiles and interests) from the same level of studies who, during the whole semester (the duration of one project cycle) work on a particular topic on their own. The topics are related to different spheres of education, and cover the areas of science, poetry, literature, art, business, and more. The total number of cycles is six (6) – one per each semester during Bachelor studies. The aim of this project, which presents the core of studies at UDG and distinguishes us from other universities, is for the students to develop the following:

1. Creativity – the ability of creating something new and eliminating fear of difference. Finding

relations between seemingly unrelated facts in order to find a creative solution to the problem.

2. Initiative and innovation – the courage to make decisions and adopt an innovative approach towards problem-solving and looking at the problem from different perspectives.

3. Team work and team spirit – the development of the ability to work on a team, simulation of real-life situation: cooperation with people students do not know, development of higher level of tolerance and communication with people of different profiles.

4. Performing in public – the competition within the project is held in front of the audience of at least 150 people. Through 6 cycles (semesters), students practice the ability of public speaking and discussion in front of a large audience.

5. Communicative abilities and managing conflicts – the ability to communicate with others and different people, that is, conflict-solving within the teams.

6. Leadership – the struggle for one's own ideas and defense of personal attitudes. By developing leadership abilities, students

develop the ability to organize the teamwork.

7. Friendliness, tolerance and understanding of others

8. Students' general education

This semester's theme was "Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky: Martyr and Thinker"

What is the goal of this theme for "Ideas and Character"?

To awaken students passion for life through the life of Dostoevsky himself, as well as through the lives of his main characters. The aim is for students to turn towards life, to not view life as a straight path leading you calmly to the destination we all face—death—but to instill and develop in yourself the mental paradigm: Life is a struggle! Life is a struggle! Life is a struggle! Life is like a shipwreck survivor; we try to grab onto every straw!... To seize every opportunity!... Leave behind the fast-food paradigm of understanding life: that everything can be achieved quickly and easily, that everything belongs to us, and that someone else should provide it all for us... You and your generation are suffering from the illness of pampering!... Can reading Dostoevsky "shake" you out of this comfort?...

“But that was back then! We live in a modern age now!”... Yes, much has changed! Especially technologically! But people have not changed! And Dostoevsky writes precisely about people, about humanity, about character, personality, and value systems... The same people, like the characters in Dostoevsky’s books, dressed differently and holding mobile phones, walk around you, socialize with you. Around you are disguised Dostoevskian characters, both the evil ones and the good ones. How can they be recognized? How can we learn to read people?

Having seen its importance and influence on UDG students, the “Ideas and Character” Project has been introduced as a mandatory part of teaching activities within courses in study programmes at UDG.





Graduation Ceremony for UDG Students

As a reminder of the symbolic number of students enrolled in the first two UDG faculty units, 111 students each in two study programmes, the graduation ceremony is held on 11th November at 11 o'clock every year. This year, the ceremony was attended by about 2,000 students, parents, lecturers, guests from business sector, international institutions and other admirers of UDG work, friends and partners.

425 students graduated from twelve faculties at the University of Donja Gorica in academic year 2023/24. The total number of students who completed a master's degree at our University is 135, while in the same academic year, 5 students completed their PhD studies.

On the occasion of University Day, a traditional speech was delivered by the rector, Prof. Dr Veselin Vukotić, who pointed out that UDG is a successful start-up idea, not only in Montenegro and that he hope that their current life at the UDG has awakened their courage and boldness to believe in themselves respect their freedom and dignity, and to have self-respect.

This event is being organized with the intention that everything that was invested in student personality, character, and humanity during their studies will be integrated even more deeply and organically into their being, that the memory of this event will always awaken in students the messages you received and cultivated during studies at the UDG.



Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Republic of Korea

Polish First Lady Agata Duda Visits Hankuk University of Foreign Studies... Discusses Expansion of 'Reading Culture Promotion Campaign'

On Thursday, October 24, First Lady Agata Duda, who was visiting Korea with Polish President Andrzej Duda during his state visit, visited our university, met with President Park Jeong-woon, and had a meeting with students majoring in Polish.

Mrs. Agatha Duda praised Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, saying, "As the best foreign studies institution in Korea, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies has led the nation's development since the Korean War and raised its status on the international





stage.” In addition, the First Lady introduced the “Reading for All Nation - Reading Culture Promotion Campaign” that the Office of the Polish President has hosted since 2012, and expressed her hope for the expansion of the campaign, saying, “I hope that this campaign, in which Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, the mecca of foreign language education that teaches the languages of the world, selects one book every year and reads it together, will spread.” Present at the event were Vice President for Finance and External Affairs Kim Min-jung, Dean of International Affairs Yang Jae-wan, and Dean of the Polish Department Choi Seong-eun, who expressed their sympathy for the purpose of the campaign and shared various opinions on exchanges between our university and Polish universities.

After a friendly chat with President Park



Jung-woon, Ms. Agata Duda met with Polish students and told them about her experience as a German teacher in her younger years, and said that she had been eagerly awaiting today's meeting. She also encouraged and thanked the students who had chosen Polish, a difficult foreign language, as their major. Choi Woo-jae (Class of 2018) and Kim Min-seo (Class of 2022), dressed in traditional Polish attire, presented the First Lady with a bouquet of flowers and had a cordial conversation with Ms. Duda about various topics such as why she chose Polish as her major, her future career path, and her favorite Polish authors, and also allowed her to ask questions of the students.

The First Lady also presented the attendees with souvenirs she had prepared, and presented the Polish language department with sports T-shirts featuring the Polish



national coat of arms, a collection of Polish literature, and various board games and word puzzles as encouragement to continue learning Polish in an enjoyable way.

Kang Tae-i (class of 20), who participated in the event, said, “I felt a great sense of pride in being a member of the Polish Department and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, because I was able to speak directly with the First Lady in Polish, which I chose as my major. I remember the words emphasizing the need for reading.” Kim Jeong-hyeok (graduate school, European Union Studies, majoring in Polish politics) said, “Through my meeting with the First Lady, I was able to experience the cultural bond between Korea and Poland. In the future, I would like to become a Polish regional expert and play a role in promoting friendship between the two countries.”

Related: Wizyta w Koreańskim Uniwersytecie Języków Obcych Hankuk (Office of the President of Poland, 2024.10.24.) (<https://www.prezydent.pl/malzonka-prezydenta/aktywnosc/wizyta-w-koreanskim-universytecie-jezykow-obcych-hankuk-93317>)

Mutah University, Jordan

Mutah Establishes Dentistry Faculty

Mutah University has announced the completion of its educational and medical infrastructure by establishing a Faculty of Dentistry. This significant step aims to enhance the healthcare sector in Southern Jordan, particularly in Karak Governorate. According to the University's president, Prof. Salam Al-Naimat, the initiative represents a qualitative addition to the institution, striving to advance



medical education and directly serve the local community by preparing specialized dental professionals to meet market demands.

Since its establishment, Mutah University has played a pivotal role in improving healthcare services across the region. Its affiliated specialized Healthcare Center clinics provide critical medical services to local residents while also serving as a training ground for students from the faculties of Medicine, Pharmacy, and Nursing. The addition of the Faculty of Dentistry will further address essential healthcare needs, particularly in oral and dental care, areas that often lack adequate resources in Southern Jordan.

Mutah University aims to strengthen medical education by fostering a comprehensive academic environment equipped with advanced facilities and skilled faculty. The new Faculty of Dentistry enhances the university's reputation as a leading academic hub in Southern Jordan, capable of graduating competent professionals to support the healthcare workforce across the country.

The university has confirmed its readiness for this expansion by equipping the new faculty with state-of-the-art laboratories and lecture halls that meet global standards. The Faculty of Dentistry is expected to not only provide high-quality education but also support

scientific research in oral and dental health, aligning with national healthcare policies and sustainable development goals.

With this addition, Mutah University strengthens its position not only as an educational institution but also as a strategic partner in advancing public health, particularly in underserved communities. This reflects its commitment to empowering local and national development through education and healthcare.

Samarkand International University of Technology, Uzbekistan

SIUT Participates in the 9th International SUN Conference in Naples

From November 12 to 14, 2024, the 9th General Assembly of the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN) was held in Naples, Italy. Since February 2023, SIUT has been a member of this international network, which strengthens academic collaboration among universities located along the ancient routes of the Silk Road.

The 9th Annual Assembly was organized by the University of Naples “L’Orientale” (Italy) and



the Canadian University Dubai (UAE), which currently chairs SUN. Alongside the Assembly, the 8th Annual Conference of the International Association of Silk-Road Studies (IASS) was held under the theme “From Silk Roads to World History Civilizations: Heroes, Conquerors and Adventurers”.

The main theme of the 9th General Assembly was “Strengthening the Network Power of SUN for Fostering International Cooperation and Collaboration among Member Universities of SUN”. The event brought together representatives from 21 universities across 17 countries located along the terrestrial and maritime routes of the Silk Road. Among the attendees were rectors, presidents, vice-chancellors, heads of delegations, professors, and students from SUN member universities.



In total, the conference gathered over 350 participants.

Traditionally, the Assembly began with a flag parade of SUN member universities, and the SIUT flag proudly took its place in the ceremony.

A notable achievement was the success of SIUT student Elyor Sabirov, who was among the top 10 authors in the international WRICOS 2023-2024 essay competition (Writing Contest of SUN), held as part of the 9th General Assembly. Elyor received a special award and certificate in recognition of his achievement. Another significant event for the university was the election of SIUT Professor Mohammad Galety as the President of the International Association of Silk-Road Studies (IASS) for 2025.



At the conclusion of the Assembly, future SUN conferences were announced. By unanimous decision, SIUT was named the host of the “milestone” 10th General Assembly of SUN and the 9th Annual IASS Conference in 2025. The decision was ceremonially confirmed by the passing of the SUN flag to Professor Sungdon Hwang, Dean of the Korean Institute of Technology and Culture (KITC) within SIUT.

SIUT’s active participation in international events under the auspices of SUN highlights the university’s commitment to strengthening ties with the global academic community, creating new opportunities for students and faculty, and

advancing educational and scientific projects on a global scale. The university strives to make a significant contribution to the development of global dialogue, supporting SUN's mission to build bridges between cultures through education.

We look forward to seeing you at the next 10th General Assembly of SUN in Samarkand!

Write for us

SILKROADIA is the official webzine of the Silk-Road Universities Network (SUN). We have more than 800,000 subscribers including professors, researchers, students, presidents, rectors, and chancellors of universities & research institutions located along the land and maritime Silk Roads. We welcome your articles and images on any of the topics related to the Silk Roads. The topics are those mentioned below but not limited to:

Culture on the Silk Roads: religion, local cuisine, artwork, jewelry, toys, pottery, dance, music, musical instruments, traditional / contemporary dress, types of dwelling, festivals, rituals, weddings, funerals, taboos.

Heritage on the Silk Roads: archaeological / historical heritage sites, literature, paintings, statues and sculptures.

Travel on the Silk Roads: natural wonders, markets, hotels, caravan-serais, transportation.

Any interesting and diverse stories about people, places and events in your area, including the life of ordinary people and interview.

*All articles and images shall be original and not infringe upon copyright rules. The working language is English and contributors' contact information must be included.

Please send to sunwebzine@sun0822.org

SILKROADIA seeks student reporters

SILKROADIA is looking for students who are willing to write articles about the Silk Roads and other topics of their interest.

What SUN student reporters do?

- Report Silk Roads-related activities and events in their country
- Report important activities and events in their university
- Work on articles or images as requested by the SUN Secretariat

Qualifications

Students of the member universities of SUN

Must be fluent in English

Must send at least two writing samples in English to **sunwebzine@sun0822.org**

SUN student reporters are usually expected to work for one semester.

What they get

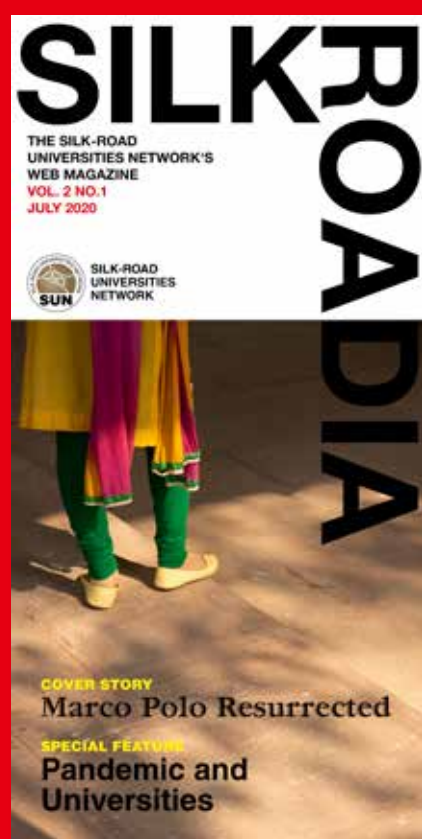
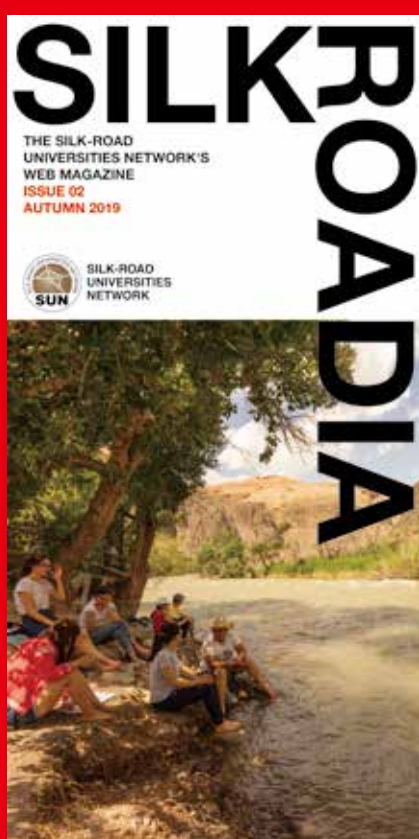
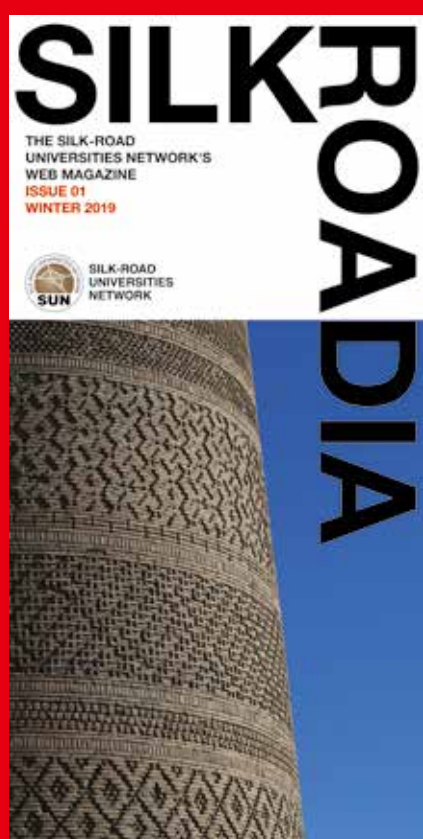
Articles and images published on SUN webzine and website.

Receives the official certificate from SUN

The student, who is annually selected as the best reporter by the SUN secretariat, will be invited to attend the annual General Assembly of SUN with full coverage of the air travel and accommodations.

How to apply

Contact us at **sunwebzine@sun0822.org**



Advertise on SILKROADIA

**The official webzine of SUN
to carry advertisements from
next issue**

SILKROADIA, the official webzine of the Silk-Road Universities Network, is a biannual publication which was launched in 2019. All the editions published so far are available at the SUN website.

As the official publication of SUN, ***SILKROADIA*** aims to serve as an effective medium of communications among the SUN Family members and between SUN and the outside world.

In order to fulfill its mission, ***SILKROADIA*** features a variety of interesting, informative and insightful articles and images, most of them provided by professors and students of the SUN member universities and institutes. The contents vary from in-depth academic articles and com-

mentaries authored by experts to easy-to-enjoy stories on heritage and travel on the Silk Roads. We are proud of having published genuinely original contents – like the imaginary interview which highlighted people like Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta, the legendary travelers and adventurers who are identified with the ancient Silk Roads.

Such an abundance of interesting contents on **SILKROADIA** draws a lot of readers from around the world. The webzine already boasts of a regular audience of about 800,000 people, including the faculty members and students of the 82 member universities and institutes in 65 cities of 28 countries along the Silk Roads. This is one of the reasons we began thinking about the potential of **SILKROADIA** as a potential place for advertisements.

Carrying advertisements on **SILKROADIA** has two objectives: First, advertisement revenue will certainly help SUN stand on its own financially, which has become more urgent in the wake of the ceasing of support from the Gyeongsangbuk-do Provincial Government. Second, advertisements on **SILKROADIA** will help the webzine raise its standard to a higher level. Good publications draw good advertisers and a genuinely popular publication cannot go without advertisements.

It is against this backdrop that **SILKROADIA** will carry advertisements from the next issue, which is expected to be published around June 2021. The first potential advertisers could be member universities and institutes of SUN who wish to promote their academic programs, exchange of students and other international programs and events. The advertisement pages of course will be open to those outside SUN, including educational associations, organizations and companies.

Details, including the rates and formats, will be released soon, which will be delivered to member universities and institutes and outside organizations through the official communication channel of the SUN Secretariat and **SILKROADIA**.

We expect active support from SUN members. Thank you.

Ad rates (tentative)

Page size	Price	Submission due
Full page	USD 500	TBA
1/2 page	USD 300	TBA
1/4 page	USD 200	TBA